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AN

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IN

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By JOSEPH COTTLE,

AUTHOR OF

“REMINISCENCES OF COLEBRIDGE & SOUTHEY.”

Fourth Edition.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, & LONGMANS,
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1850.



CONTENTS OF BOOKS.

BOOK I.

Ivar, the evening before he departs from Denmark with new forces to attack England, consults the Oracle:—Kills a Mariner:—how punished by the illusions of the Witch. Swears never again to take the life of any unarmed person in the Island to which he is going. Departs for Britain.

BOOK II.

Alfred, after the severest of his defeats by Hubba, retreats before the Danes, and as a temporary measure, announces his determination of retiring into solitude. Introduction of Oddune,—Sigbert. Oddune dismissed to encourage the West Saxons Alfred appoints Selwood forest as the rendezvous of his Troops. Departs with Alswitha his queen, and their infant son, toward a neighbouring heath. Time, the evening. Season, midsummer.

BOOK III.

Alfred meets a beggar, with whom he divides his only loaf. Arrives at Glastonbury Abbey. Leaves his Queen and Infant Son there. Departs alone to seek some obscure retreat.

BOOK IV.

Alfred, a menial in the cottage of a Neatherd. Acca upbraids the King for her burnt cakes. Ceolric the Neatherd, arrives with tidings that Glastonbury Abbey has been destroyed by the Danes, and all its inhabitants slain: and that Earl Oddune with his followers, had retreated to Kenwith Castle, before Hubba. Alfred rudely dismissed to his pallet.

BOOK V.

Alfred in the Neatherd's Cottage. Sigbert enters the Cottage with a Child, and the garment of the King found on the moor. Upbraids Alfred for not being in the wars, and fighting for his King. The discovery. Led to a grove of firs. Sent to obtain tidings of Alswitha. Alfred returning to the Cottage in his new garb, is known by his Child. Surprise of the Cottagers. Ceolric sent to Oddune in Kenwith Castle. The child left with Acca. The King departs to join his Army in Selwood Forest.

BOOK VI.

Sigbert rescues a Cottager and his Daughter, from the assaults of two Danes. Meets in a ruined abbey a woman who had heard that Alswitha still lived, and claims to be introduced to the King. Is overtaken by Guthrum the Dane, when the woman is by him borne away. Sigbert spared to convey a taunting message to Alfred.

BOOK VII.

Alfred meets a company of Saxons fleeing into Wales from Ivar, just landed in Britain. Persuades them to return. Leads them to his retreat in Selwood Forest. Joins his troops. Sends heralds to arouse his subjects.

BOOK VIII.

Alfred's interview with a Hermit. Sigbert arrives in the Saxon Camp. Alswitha discovered to be the Captive borne away by Guthrum.

BOOK IX.

Ceolric's return. Narrates his perils. Alfred resolves to burn Ivar's Fleet. Sigbert's violence condemned.

BOOK X.

Alfred's interview with a Witch. The burning of the Danish Fleet.

BOOK XI.

Oddune escapes by night from Kenwith. Meets Alfred. His Narrative. Oswald. Montalto. Matilda.

BOOK XII.

The Danes attack Kenwith Castle. Find Oddune fled. Arrival of Ivar. Death of Ella. Tidings brought of the burning of the Fleet. Conflict of Hubba and Guthrum. Restrained by Ivar. Hubba breathes revenge.

BOOK XIII.

Alfred proposes to enter the Danish Camp, disguised as a Harper. Dissuaded by Oddune. Alfred and Oddune's interview with a Woodman. The King obtains a harp and rustic dress. Sets out on his exploit.

BOOK XIV.

Alfred's visit to the Danish Camp. His harp endangered. Interference of Guthrum. Alfred, (as a Harper) called into the Castle by Guthrum's Daughter. Sees Alswitha.

BOOK XV.

Scene: the Castle. Present Ivar and Hubba. Wrath of Hubba toward Guthrum. Guthrum enters. Hubba claims Guthrum's Captive for a Sacrifice. Resisted by Guthrum. Conflict. Ivar declares Guthrum's Captive shall be sacrificed. Suspends his resolution. A harp is heard. Ivar commands the Harper to be introduced. Alfred enters. Feigns madness. Suspected by Hubba to be the god, Lok. Hubba proposes that Guthrum's Captive shall be present at their next meeting. The Harper ordered to attend.

BOOK XVI.

Scene: Hall in Kenwith Castle: present, Ivar, Hubba, Guthrum, and the Harper. Alswitha is led in by Guthrum's Daughter. Hubba claims her for a sacrifice. Resisted by Guthrum. Ivar accedes to her being sacrificed. Retracts from recollecting his oath. Alfred and Alswitha respond to each other on the harp. A spy arrives with information respecting Alfred.

BOOK XVII.

Alfred leaves the Danish Camp. While returning to Selwood meets Sigbert. Sends him to the Cottage at Ethelney. Alfred approaches the Woodman's Cottage. Finds the aged pair slain. Gives them burial. Joins his Troops. Marches to meet the enemy. Beholds the Danish Army advancing. Both the Danes and Alfred retire to neighbouring hills. Oddune sent with a summons to the Foe.

BOOK XVIII.

At the break of day Alfred conducts his army into the plain to meet the Danes. Dissensions in the Enemy's Camp. Ivar reflects on Hubba. His resentment. Hubba and Ivar restrained from battle by Guthrum. Reconciliation till Alfred is conquered: The Danes, on beholding the Saxon Army advancing, descend into the plain to meet the conflict. The great battle of Eddington.

BOOK XIX.

Total defeat of the Danes. Ivar slain by Alfred. Hubba sorely wounded by Oddune. Guthrum and a body of the surviving Danes fly to the near Castle. Meeting of Alfred and Oddune. The King and Oddune assist the wounded. Approach where Hubba lay writhing. Alfred offers him aid. Hubba disdains his service. He recognizes in Alfred the Harper:—breathes imprecations: stabs himself to the heart. Montalto among the slain:—borne with solemn dirge to the grave. The Barrow raised over the slaughtered Danes. The Woodman's Son. Oddune sent to summons Guthrum to surrender.

BOOK XX.

While Guthrum (in the Castle to which he had retired) is in consultation with the Danish Chiefs, Oddune arrives and claims his submission to Alfred. Is indignantly repelled. Oddune asks for the liberation of his Captive. Alswitha is released. Her interview with Alfred.

BOOK XXI.

Alswitha's narrative since her separation from Alfred. Commends the noble conduct of Guthrum. Deplores the loss of her Child. Alfred announces her Child to be still alive and well. Oddune sent with cordial assurances to Guthrum.

BOOK XXII.

Oddune again visits Guthrum. Prevails on him to confide in the King. Guthrum's interview with Alfred. Recognizes in him the Harper:—beholds his Captive in the Queen. Guthrum declares himself a Christian. Ascribes his conversion to Alswitha. Weeps at the loss of his Daughter. She springs from her retreat, and embraces her Father. Guthrum told to prepare for Baptism on the following morning. Returns with his Daughter to the Castle.

BOOK XXIII.

The vision of the Guardian Angel.

BOOK XXIV.

Baptism of Guthrum:—his Daughter; and thirty Danish Chiefs, in the river Thone. Arrival of Aeca and Ceolric with the young Prince Edward. Interview. Alfred's final address to his victorious Troops. His description of Britain, and Britons. General exultation. Ascriptions of praise to God. Conclusion.

CHIEF CHARACTERS.

Saxons.

ALFRED, THE GREAT.
 ALSWITHA, HIS QUEEN.
 ODDUNE, EARL OF DEVON.
 SIGBERT, ABBOT OF WILTON.
 CEOLRIC, THE NEATHERD.
 ACCA, HIS WIFE.

Danish.

IVAR
 HUBBA } *Sons of Begner Loddbrog, King of Denmark.*
 GUTHRUM, AN AGED DANISH CHIEFTAIN.

P R E F A C E .

THE following poem commences with the defeat which succeeded the fall of Chippenham, when Alfred's condition was the most depressed, and terminates after the Danes had received their great overthrow at Eddington.

Although the subject of this Poem refers to a remote period, it is founded on one of the most memorable, and best authenticated epochs in British History, when Alfred arose, almost preternaturally, to illuminate the age of which he was the chief actor and ornament. A king, with such predilections in his favour, is eminently suited to become the Hero of a Poem ; who, for his diversified qualities, administrative, moral, and mental, was perhaps the finest on record, of all uninspired characters, and which distinction is confirmed by the enthusiasm with which his contemporaries regarded him, and the unrivalled admiration borne to his memory by all succeeding generations.

Yet features, so transcendent, only render their application to poetry the more difficult, for who could hope to represent Alfred with any approximation to his desert ? his perseverance, and invincible bravery, manifested by his rising superior to defeats that would have disheartened spirits less intrepid, and which enabled him finally to conquer and expel from Britain, his country's most pow-

erful and implacable foe. Who could fully display his solicitude to extend the bounds of human knowledge?—or sufficiently estimate the enlightened laws which he devised;—many of them perpetuated to the present day?—his magnanimity?—his love of justice?—his generosity?—his genuine piety, uncontaminated by the corrupt theological admixtures of later ages?—his firmness in adversity?—his moderation in the hour of success?—his high intellectual cultivation?—his superiority to prejudice, and current superstitions?—his strenuous encouragement of Learning and Science?—his conjugal and paternal virtues?—with all the other imperial endowments for which he was so conspicuously distinguished?—or, to include the whole in one comprehensive word;—to represent him as a *Christian*, (when fully exemplified) that highest of designations!—an enlightened, active, and consistent Christian, placed on an eminence, where the largest scope was offered for the display of his regal accomplishments, and the development of his comprehensive mind.

But although every attempt adequately to exhibit Alfred must of necessity fail, there are *degrees* of success, and of the proportion here realized, the Reader will judge. It will devolve on him also to determine whether the prominent events in Alfred's life have been so selected and arranged as to produce the most advantageous effects; and, especially, as the most difficult and important of all attainments, whether the whole has been so combined as to arrest the attention, and sustain the *interest* through so long a poem.

It may be questioned, whether the Writer has been judicious in having introduced, what may be denominated an *under-plot*, in the captivity, and redemption of *Alswitha*. The belief was entertained, that if any det-

riment was likely to arise from this complexity of arrangement, it would be more than compensated by representing the pure and elevated affection subsisting between Alfred and his Queen. The Dramatic Poets have been rather distinguished by a different exhibition. They have commonly associated discord and infelicity, as concomitants of the marriage state. Here, on the contrary, an example is offered, in strict accordance with history, of a mutual connubial attachment, uniformly and reciprocally tender and dignified, and which throws a lustre over the human condition, by showing its capacities for happiness, under the influence of sound Principles, and true Religion.

The remark may here be made, that a Poem, bearing the title of 'Alfred,' was published by the Writer, at the commencement of the present century, which proceeded to the Third Edition, when its defects, not unreasonably, withdrew it from notice. It is a circumstance scarcely worthy of being noticed, except as it shows the effect which may be produced by a slight, and long anterior cause. The Writer, in examining, some years since, numerous ancient papers, including letters received by him from his old and revered friend, *Robert Hall*, happened to light on one, sent in acknowledgment of a copy which had been presented to him of the First 4to Edition of *Alfred*, in the year 1801, and which, both the letter and the present, had escaped his recollection. Due allowance was made for the civil language usual on such occasions, but the manner of Mr. H's expression determined the Writer to read once more his almost forgotten Poem of '*Alfred*.'—The result of that perusal is the following work.

It was read at this time, with a rigid impartiality, and, from its previous estrangement, almost with the feeling

of novelty. Nor is it unreasonable to suppose, that in so considerable an intervening space, old associations must have been less tenaciously held, and, consequently, faults the more readily detected; whilst the judgment, with so great an accession of experience, might be expected to have acquired additional maturity, and the taste to have become more correct and fastidious. This progression was, perhaps, as in ordinary cases, to a certain extent, experienced.

Except for the above casual incident, the Poem might never again have been looked at by the Writer. The work was originally composed in the ardour of youth, and on this remote reperusal, numerous passages were perceived to be defective, not so much in sentiment as expression; and other portions were found susceptible of beneficial alterations, and curtailments, so as to remove obvious, or the more subtle order of blemishes. Other parts also appeared, where appropriate additions might be made, tending to increase the interest, and give consistency to the whole. The Writer was convinced that the basis of the Poem was sufficiently firm to admit of a reconstruction; while some regret was felt, (detached from personal considerations) lest a work which was believed at least to possess good tendencies, should have suffered and continue to suffer, through inferior, and remediable, deficiencies. The story of Alfred, it was conceived, presented a large field for exhibiting some of the best ingredients of Poetry, *Feeling*, and *Passion*; and deliberate reflection suggested, that, with an adequate degree of time and care, it might be made an instrument for securing some portion of refined entertainment, united with instruction, and *that* in a class of writing where the ground for such qualities had not been abundantly pre-occupied.

In accordance with the above intimation, numerous and extensive alterations have been made, accompanied with the exclusion of a large proportion of the former work, whilst still more has been added, (possibly of a better description.) This has proceeded to such an extent as to constitute the present poem, in the substantial sense, *a New Work*; so that no further notice will be taken of the previous editions. These alterations, however, have not extended to the Plan of the Poem. This, in all *material* respects, remains the same. It was, in the first instance, after much consideration, determined upon, and in the subsequent revision, no valid objection to the disposition of its parts, as at first arranged, was judged to be required.

It does not become a necessary consequence that all which the Writer intended, should have been accomplished, but he may be permitted to state, that the following summary comprises the leading objects which he purposed to himself, in the projection, and, additionally, in the more recent completion of the following Poem. It was his first, and his last design, as an essential accompaniment, to exhibit, and inculcate, on all suitable occasions, the broad features of Christianity, as well as to present their practical effect, without sectarian peculiarities. In its political aspect, an intention was entertained of exhibiting the consequences of disunion amongst a confederated people, like the Nations of the Heptarchy, with the benefits resulting from one wise and commanding spirit, exercised in encouraging others, and urged on by an unconquerable reliance (which success justified) that he would be enabled (with the blessing of Heaven) finally, to triumph over his insulting and remorseless foes. The additional design was, that while patriotic emotions were excited, an interest should be kindled, founded on

high national recollections, and *English Feeling*. It was especially his hope, to awaken in the Reader, some interior sympathetic chord, that might secure his *affections* for the Hero of the Poem; which, by a valuable and inflexible law of our nature, is never felt but in the cause of suffering or triumphant Virtue. With some imperfect attainment of the above objects, he was cheered with the conviction, that if he could obtain this secret avenue to the heart,—a tear from the eye of Sensibility, or one ejaculatory emotion, though a silent evidence, would be regarded as the highest praise, and become an assurance that the Poem was not totally destitute of pathos;—that the Writer's own feelings had been, in some measure reciprocated, and that what had favourably operated on one mind might extend a similar impression to many.

But there are few subjects which may not be regarded in a second, and opposite view, and it was recollected, that the fact might prove the reverse of this favourable anticipation; that the Reader's attention, instead of being maintained, might become relaxed as he advanced, where neither flowers by the way-side encouraged him to pursue his course, nor the expectation of any ulterior disclosure, or reverse of impressions, urged his persistence to the end. Should this unhappy alternative really occur, it was remembered, that it would only furnish one fresh instance of zealous and long-continued efforts proving ineffective, a fate which has attended productions of far higher claims than '*Alfred*' presumes to offer. On the contrary, if instead of this discouraging termination, the Reader's interest *should* be sustained to the end, by motives superior to those of curiosity, or the mere unravelling of a Tale; that is, by the successful exhibition of Nature, and of Passion, it might, it was recollected, give a buoyancy to the Poem, which the Writer desired,

(particularly at his period of life,) only in proportion to its capacity of doing good.

The following is the letter of Mr. Hall to which a reference was made.

Cambridge, April 28. 1801.

Dear Sir ;

I return you my sincere thanks for the handsome present of your *Alfred*. I have perused it with much pleasure, and with an interest, which, instead of languishing grew more lively every step I advanced. Many parts of it, in my humble opinion, are animated by a very fine spirit of poetry ; many of the images original ; and not a few of the descriptions delight by their beauty and exactness,—at the same time that the sentiments are such as must touch every feeling and virtuous heart.

It gives me great pleasure to find you are a truly Christian Poet, who is not ashamed to avow an attachment to the Scriptures, in this sceptical age. The workings of Alfred's mind, while advancing to his retirement in the Isle of Ethelney are forcibly and naturally described. The Spirit of Destruction in the Sixth Book is pourtrayed with the genuine enthusiasm of poetry. The evening scene in the ——— Book is truly picturesque. The feelings of Alswitha on the supposed death of her child, in the Twenty First Book, are so represented as must find a corresponding echo in every mother's heart. A great variety of other parts of your Poem pleased me much, and I arose from reading it, not only with a mind regaled with a succession of pleasing pictures, but, what was much more, with my heart softened and improved by virtuous and benevolent sentiments.

From yours truly,

ROBERT HALL.

An unexpected peculiarity will probably be noticed in the following Poem ;—a warlike subject conducted without the intervention, or (as a martial spirit would term it) the garniture of *one battle*. Two grand antagonistical powers are brought into collision ; one contending for an usurpation, the other for his rightful inheritance ; his country, and all that could animate man's heart ; yet the final decision is made with an imaginary, rather than a visible conflict.

It is acknowledged that these sanguinary engagements (producing often their mountains of slain) have been emblazoned in poems of superlative excellence, and may hereafter ornament others of the highest merit, but an *experiment* was determined upon in the present work, where battles were dispensed with, and even regarded, not only on this occasion, as unnecessary, but likely to become prejudicial. Battles it was considered, might produce temporary excitement, yet a higher, a more legitimate, and permanent class of influences, it was believed, might be produced, by displaying the less stimulating, but nobler and chaster passions. Battles are not only repulsive in their immediate effect, from the violence offered to humanity, but they tend to undermine the finer, and more sensitive feelings of the heart, by familiarizing the mind to revolting images. Descriptions of battles, whether conducted by brute force, or scientific skill, are now fairly *worn out* by their necessary sameness. Independently of which, a battle, from its magnitude, and the complication of ideas it calls up, overpowers the mind, till confusion becomes the result, and the excess of indistinct feeling, approximates to, if it does not terminate, in indifference. Simple objects, which the imagination can fairly grasp, are always the most influential, and which is illustrated by the effect produced on the

mind by *Single Combats*. Who does not feel more intensely affected by the individual conflicts of David and Goliath ; Hector and Achilles ; and Eneas and Turnus, with whom he has previously sympathized, than when tidings are announced of the deaths of thousands of Israelites, Greeks, or Romans, no one of whom was known even by name ? The one is a definite object, a tangible substance ; the other exists in the mind as a mere abstraction.

The generality of men admire strength and heroism, without nicely analyzing the justice of the cause on which those qualities are exercised. But whilst, as in the case of Alfred, there might prevail zealous resistance to foes, in defence of laws, liberty, and national existence ; most considerate minds will admit, that the greatest scourge which visits mankind, (involving not unfrequently the extremes of guilt, and always the depths of misery,) should never be presented to the mind, but under circumstances calculated to produce less of admiration than abhorrence.

Impressed with these sentiments, it cannot excite surprise that the Writer should have excluded formal battles. In consistency with which object, the Poem opens immediately *after* a defeat ; and at the conclusion of the Eighteenth Book, when Alfred achieved his great victory, the decisive conflict is made to take place, (adopting the language of the Drama) behind the scenes. An endeavour was made by all preliminary incidents, to raise a deep solicitude in the Reader's mind, from the preparations reciprocally made for an exterminating contest, when the Book abruptly concludes with the meeting of *Alfred* and *Ivar* in mortal combat.

'Death-doing work is there ! God aid the just !'

The next Book opens with Alfred's exclaiming, ' Spare ! Spare, the vanquished ! ' By this disposition, the Reader's imagination conceives all the horrors of an intermediate conflict, without himself being exposed to its painful manifestation.

If it had been assumed that the interest would primarily depend on, and terminate with, the triumph of Alfred over his Danish Invaders, from this event producing consequences so important, all will admit, that the hazard, and consequent impolicy, would have been great, in adding to this decisive catastrophe *Six Books*, calculated, as they must have been, (according to the above presumption) to produce, not only an anticlimax, but insufferable weariness. To this test the Writer is willing to adhere ; and in case of an adverse decision, to own that he entertained an erroneous judgment, by relying too much on the equivocal influence of *sympathy* and *passion*. Here every Reader's own mind will become a tribunal. If, after the defeat and death of the Danish Chieftains, the Reader should feel his attention suspended, and experience no disposition to follow the Poem to its conclusion, the Writer, in his calculations, must have fatally erred. But, on the contrary, if the Reader, rising into an element above the clashing of arms, should persist in pursuing the work, with undiminished, or increased interest, it will furnish decisive evidence that on this one speculative point, he has not reasoned inaccurately. There is no appeal from a rejection, or an acquittal of the *heart*.

The following is strictly a Dramatic Poem, on an extended scale. The plan ; much of the phraseology ; the characters ; (few in number, not to distract the Reader's attention) with their mode of introduction ; the episodes ; the incidents ; the catastrophe ; all are dramatic. In

this case, where the Writer speaks in his own person, as he does in description, narrative, and, often, in the expression of passion, his language is unconstrained, but in dialogue, the reflecting Reader will readily admit, he is subject to certain limitations, and must, (whilst the harmony with the greatest diversity of pause, is scrupulously to be maintained) adopt the mode of speech accordant with the character speaking, so that the same language would not equally become the clown and the philosopher. Yet with every concession to this diversity of speech, the loftiest language may doubtless be sustained without turgidity or bombast, as well as the humblest independently of puerility or meanness. The boundaries which separate these often proximate and conflicting qualities will be determined alone by a correct taste.

But although a poem like the present, partaking so essentially of the dramatic spirit, may successfully avoid vulgarity, or colloquial feebleness, the Reader must expect, and may reasonably be required to tolerate, occasionally at least, a lower tone in the composition, as when *Acca* addresses *Alfred*, in the neatherd's cottage, on account of his *plebeian deficiencies*, 'Thou art a helpless drone, where hast thou lived?' So important is it to suit the speech to the speaker, that more refined language in this place would have implicated the judgment. There is, not unfrequently, danger in forsaking the simple expression of Nature, which is always chaste and appropriate. An infringement of this rule often becomes a hazardous experiment, from conveying, under the design of raising the subject, an artificial elevation, which instead of conferring dignity, only *inflates*; a quality, in all its shades, offensive to the nicely discriminating. If this sentiment be correct, to resist the aspiring, and to submit to the humbler phrase, is, sometimes an excel-

lence :—and fortunate will that Writer be, who, in subordinate parts, can gracefully descend, and, on more favourable occasions, can equally rise to the altitude required.

Numerous Notes have been appended to the Poem, illustrative of the Saxons, and Saxon times ; together with such notices of the Scandinavian Mythology as elucidate the visionary and savage faith of the Danes. On this faith and its *illusions*, the First Book is founded.* It afforded so large a field for the descriptive, and so abounded with imagery, that just that portion of it was originally introduced which the occasion appeared to require, although from the inducements offered, more of those superstitions might, at that time, have been incorporated, if their moral utility had been less problematical. At the present moment it is judged almost necessary to apologize for the introduction of the *First Book* so dissimilar to the remainder of the work. Many readers, perhaps feeling the incongruity noticed, and, disregarding the slight integuments which connect it with the Poem, (The chief—the rescue of Alswitha, in the Sixteenth Book) will proceed at once to the Second Book, where the subject properly begins. Notwithstanding its apparent incompatibility, the Writer felt some hesitation in excluding this purely imaginative part of the Work, the sport of his youthful fancy, although viewed in the sobrieties of age, he would not greatly dissent from those who considered its retention as of doubtful propriety, or even who might regard it as an excrescence. Some readers, also, may be willing to include in the same proscription, the *Twenty Third Book*, (which also might be passed

* Like '*Montalto's Lay*,' in the Eleventh Book.—There were no Lyrical Pieces originally introduced.

over, as unessential to the *plot*) but on this subject there may be a diversity of judgments, and, for more reasons than it is necessary here to express, the Writer hopes the approvers will preponderate. It became a vehicle for the expression of *individual sentiment*, which, had not that channel been selected, must have been abandoned. There are in it links which still connect it with the Poem.

The representation here given of the pitiless Danes, and their infuriated personal dissensions, is in accordance with historical records, and being their acknowledged characteristics, they are exhibited through the Poem as tyrannously influenced by all the darker class of warlike passions. This involved, it will be perceived, a necessity in the Writer to become alternately a *Saxon*, and a *Dane*, and to assume, for the moment, (almost in reality) their reciprocal views and feelings; the former with congeniality, the latter with pain, by expressing repugnant sentiments, though appropriate to the characters speaking. Nor should it be forgotten that the natural ferocity of the Danes was roused, in this conflict, into a deadly and peculiar hatred of the Saxons, in consequence of *Ella*, King of Northumberland, having taken prisoner, and put to a cruel death, *Regner Lodbrog*, the Father of *Ivar* and *Hubba*. It may further be remarked, if these representations of the Danes had originated in a sportive, and, consequently, a morbid imagination, from the display of human nature in so revolting a form, the Reader's mind would have been harrowed up unjustifiably; but the portraiture being founded in truth, the objection not only vanishes, but the Danish *Heathenism* forms an impressive contrast with the benign spirit of Alfred's *Christianity*. Yet independently of its historical accuracy, and the inference it suggests, the picture here given of these Ravagers of Britain was the more especially required, from

its tending to secure the interest of the Reader, and to throw the whole weight of his sympathies on the side of Alfred, and our suffering forefathers.*

J. C.

* A few lines of the Poem have appeared elsewhere. In future they will be confined to this Work, their proper place.

THE HERESIARCH CHURCH OF ROME.

"Shun the insidious arts that ROME provides, less dreading from her frown than from her wily praise, her peaceful Gown, Language, and Letters ; these, though fondly viewed as harmonizing graces, are but parts and instruments of deadliest servitude"

WORDSWORTH.

"The monstrous establishment which in the dark ages was substituted for the Religion of Christ, is the grandest specimen of human genius, human *wickedness*, and human *weakness*, that was ever reared" * * * "Concessions, and conciliations will not satisfy the Catholics, *Vengeance* and the *Throne* are what they want."

SOUTHEY.

THE HERESIARCH CHURCH OF ROME.

SOME Readers, whose judgments are entitled to deference may deem it rather incongruous to attach strictures on the *Church of Rome* to the Preface of this Poem. In ordinary cases there would be justice in the remark, but references having been made to Romanism in the Twenty-third Book requiring explanatory Notes, from the interest excited in the Writer's mind, the subject was pursued very far beyond the first intention, till it included a series of what were regarded as insuperable objections to Popery—deeply felt, and therefore energetically, although, it is hoped, not intemperately expressed. Yet even this reasonable explanation would have been deemed insufficient, if the *great* importance of the question contemplated had not superseded inferior considerations. It may be added, if these animadversions had not appeared in their present form and place, they would never have appeared, for they would never have been written. Nothing but a desire to expose, and counteract, flagrant Error and Heresy, together with the hope of rendering some little service to the cause of Truth and Protestantism could have induced the Writer to comment so freely and largely as he has here done, on the *Papacy*. Whether his representations of the corrupt *Romish Church* have exceeded, or fallen short of the reality : as well as whether they have originated in prejudice, or resulted from dispassionate reasoning, founded on undeniable facts, after a perusal of the following pages, the reader will decide.

It is admitted that to disparage any body of men is always painful, and rarely justifiable, particularly if those men, however nominally, are professors of Christianity; but both the establishment of Truth, and the repression of Error, sometimes demands this sacrifice, where the heart may regret that which the understanding approves.—Believing, as the Writer does, that the *Roman Catholic Church* is essentially *anti-Christian*, *Idolatrous*, and *Heresiarch*; and that its service, for the most part, is a compound of idle forms, and meretricious appendages, inculcating a false security; and in various ways producing effects, highly injurious to men's spiritual interests, it would discover in him the extreme of pusillanimity, on this fair occasion, not fearlessly to avow his sentiments. This he will here do, yet with no desire to inflict pain, unless that pain should result, unavoidably, from the undisguised enunciation of Truth.

The *Popish Religion*, in many of its leading features, is here affirmed to be '*Anti-Christian, Idolatrous, and Heresiarch*!' It is as easy as it is natural in Romanists to deny these allegations, but denial is not proof, and avails little in opposition to clear contravening evidence, such as will subsequently appear. There are, fortunately, on the present, as on most disputable points, certain ulterior and decisive tests, to which both the contending parties, may, and are bound to appeal for an equitable settlement of their difference. Consistently with this assumed fact, it may be observed, that the Papal community have so long renounced their own reason, in implicitly submitting to the dictation of their *Priests*, and, have been so long accustomed to the Rites and Ceremonies of their Church, that, from the blinding nature of habit, they cease, on this subject, to be unbiassed judges. Lest the same objection, however, unjust, should be applied to their opponents, a more unexceptionable evidence of the harmony, or dissonance of the Roman Church with the Scriptures, will be obtained, by transferring the decision to some third competent Judge; one exempt from all anterior

prepossession, and whose determination, consequently, would be entitled to the greater reliance.

The race of Greek and Roman *Heathens* has passed away ; but, without a breach of charity, it is believed, some modern Heathen might be found, amply qualified to deduce correct inferences from given premises, as it merely requires the exercise of the rational faculties. Such a man might be presented with a *New Testament*, not to concern himself with the validity of its pretensions, (irresistible as they are), but, after a deliberate perusal, to decide, impartially, whether Romanism does, or does not, in its *externals*, faithfully conform to the Directory submitted to his inspection.

He reads the Book with an attention due to its importance, from understanding it to be the foundation of the Christian's faith and practice. In this minute survey, he remarks the examples, and explicit directions of Christ and his Apostles, in the prospect of founding a Church, professedly, to be sustained by broad principles ; restricted to neither sect, party, or nation, but of universal application, and anticipating a progressive extension of its influence, till it subjected to its spontaneous authority the whole world. He notices, as some of its prominent features, a renunciation of self,—of display,—and all ostentation ; whilst he perceives this *Book of Institutes* to be eminently distinguished for the clearness of its recitals ; for its simplicity ; and the consistency of its several parts.

To exemplify the practical working of Christianity, in the Papal Church, the same *Heathen* is now introduced to the Romish Service, during some High Mass, or pompous Festival. —He looks round with astonishment!—He says to himself,—‘ These splendid exhibitions vastly surpass *our own*, although ‘ the affinity is easily traced ; yet *we* comply with our ritual, ‘ but what authority have all these close-shaven, party-coloured Priests for such diversified, and dazzling displays ? Where ‘ are the directions in the Manual, for this, and that, and ‘ that ? He would immediately say, This must be some *New*

'*Religion!*—so far as externals are concerned, a spurious imitation of our own. It cannot be *that* instituted by '*Christ*, to which it bears *no* resemblance; and all that I behold, and hear, confirms the contrariety. 'Such spectacles', he would continue to say, are not only unauthorized by, but are directly opposed to, the Original Statutes. 'Leaving these gaudy exhibitions, much of the Service is in 'an 'unknown tongue'—inexplicable to the multitude, and 'which the *Christian's Record* tells me is 'speaking into the 'air.' Many of the prayers are addressed to God; others to 'men, called Saints: (some of them of repute so doubtful, or 'notoriously bad, as to throw suspicion on the whole :) and 'some to a Woman, whom they *Deify!* And as for sights 'and ceremonies, to my simple apprehension, they are quite 'appalling!—smoke, evolving perfumes, and Pictures, and 'Images, receiving endless prostrations, with Candles, illuminating day, and Flowers, scattered about in our own true 'style. Unless my vision deceives me, not the least countenance is given for all, or for any one of these strange 'accompaniments of Religion in that 'Book of Instructions 'which I have read.'

The remark cannot be withheld (supplementary to the Heathen) that—if all these anti-Scriptural sights and ceremonies were designed merely as a spectacle, (not to say amusement) the charge would amount only to folly, an article infinitely varied, and with which the world abounds, but if they be intended as worship to the God of Heaven,—the avenue of approach to the Father of our spirits, the design is illusory, and the mode selected criminal; being an impious mockery of all that is truly devotional, and which leads the heart *from*, rather than *to*, that Almighty Being, who, if worshipped at all, must be worshipped in Spirit and in Truth.

But other subjects await the notice of the Heathen. He has been unfavourably impressed with the Romanist's conformity to the Standard Volume, of an *external* nature; but

what will be his sentiments of Romanism, and its Priests, on becoming acquainted with their *internal* springs of action, and the organization of their system! How confirmed would be his conviction that the Papacy was some *New Religion*, or rather No Religion at all! especially when he recollected the discouragement given by *Christ* to the Religion of show, where the object is, 'To be seen of men:' 'as also, the unsullied purity, in heart and life, enjoined by the *Manual*, and then had revealed to him, the inconsistent, and revolting qualities essentially pertaining to Romish Priests, in all their gradations. Their consummate artfulness!—Their pride under the mask of humility!—Their impositions!—Their outrageously false Miracles!—Their Intolerance!—Their Persecutions!—Their Bloody Proscriptions!—Their preference of Ignorance to Knowledge!—Their violated Oaths!—Their Mental Reservations!—Their grasping Avarice!—Their crafty schemes to obtain Money—and Political Influence!—Their disregard, and withdrawment, (as far as possible) from public inspection of that Inspired Volume, on the authority of which they profess to found their Religion!—'No! No!' he would instantly, and decidedly say, 'You revel in hypocrisy! Your Church, under the the cloak of sanctity, (if there be truth in the *Manual*,) is a tissue of falsehoods and deceptions! You profess to reverence and adhere to the Book, which I have attentively read, but this Book, in its clearest directions, you flagrantly neglect, and criminally conceal. You may arrogate to yourselves, the title of 'The only True Church,' but if your claims be founded on *that Book*, they are baseless. The Book expressly condemns all your idle forms, and extraneous observances. From whatever source you may have derived them, it cannot be from the *Christian's New Testament*.'

Every impartial mind must concur in the Heathen's sentiments, including the Writer, who, after a few preliminary remarks, as succinct as is practicable, will take a rapid glance at the gross deflections, and hollow pretensions of the *Roman*

Catholic Church. This Church, in the present day, notwithstanding its few recent, purblind, monkish, proselytes (the refuse of Protestantism ! and well to be spared, as Nature throws off her injurious, and peccant humours.) is evidently a capacious, but a decaying edifice, tottering to its fall !—the mere product of sublimated Priestcraft ; alike in its origin, and continuance—too long sustained by ignorance, and dissimulation ; but its end is happily approaching ! It cannot much longer resist the light of Scripture, (so justly dreaded as its mortal foe !) and the expanding intellect of man. The inhabitants of Catholic Countries are rapidly renouncing their thralldom, and, as a hopeful sign, are, for the first time, daring to *think* ; and which will ultimately, nor at any remote period, excite wonder, and self-accusation, at their thoughtlessly acquiescing so long in Priestly Impositions. This feeling, expanded, will become a prelude to a condition of Christianity, when, (rescued from its *Popish* trammels) the Spirit of God will be poured out on a renovated world, and the True Protestant Church of Christ conspicuously arise, decked in her bridal loveliness, and her ‘beautiful garments !’

Whenever this deliverance from Catholic Bondage may occur, it will be quite certain not to originate with the Romish Priesthood. They are too deeply interested in perpetuating imposing shows, and debasing superstitions, to divert the current of human feeling into more wholesome, but, to them, less productive channels. They will resemble, too faithfully, certain *Ephesian Priests*, who once cried out so lustily for two long hours, ‘Great is Diana of the Ephesians !’ ‘By this *craft* we have our wealth.’ Whenever the change may occur, it will necessarily commence with the Laity, in their being roused up, after ages of slumber, to reflect for themselves ; and, especially, to examine the *Scriptures* :—like the ‘Noble Bereans,’ to exercise the understanding bestowed on them by God, to see ‘whether those things were so.’ (The last appeal to which *Papists* would resort !) After examining the Sacred Oracles,—so long by their artful

Instructors discouraged, or prohibited, they will speedily discern the difference between twilight, and the blaze of the meridian sun; nor long delay, indignantly to reject those Shackles of the Priest, by which they have been so long, and so servilely bound!

The Roman Catholic Church has here been declared among other delinquencies, to be Heresiarch. This is a grave charge. If unfounded, it involves tremendous responsibility, such as the Writer would not incur for all that this world contains; but, if it be founded in Truth, Sacred, indestructable Truth, such as from his inmost soul he believes, the peril is withdrawn, and is succeeded by an obligation which admits of no compromise. It is therefore reiterated with redoubled confidence. The Papal Church is Heresiarch—an unsound and *Anti-Christian* Church! (Let not earnestness be mistaken for *acrimony*.) This plain declaration may excite surprise in *Catholics*, similar to that experienced by the ancient Scribes and Pharisees, when charged by Christ with breaking the Law.

A passing observation is here made. The striking resemblance, the almost identity which subsists between Romish Priests, and the ancient Scribes and Pharisees must often have struck reflecting minds. The former, like the latter, ‘Bind heavy burdens on men’s shoulders, but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.’ ‘All their works they do to be seen of men.’ ‘They make broad their Phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in synagogues, and greetings in the market, and to be called of men ‘Rabbi!’ ‘Rabbi!’ The Scribes and Pharisees ‘devoured widows’ houses, and for a pretence made long prayers.’ They also resisted the Saviour and his doctrines with an unappeasable inveteracy, while they persecuted ‘to the death,’ all who in any way opposed them,—proclaiming, with assumed infallibility, that they were exclusively the wise, and, ‘wisdom would die with them.’ Catholics, also, like their

ancient Prototypes, are sanguinary to an equal extent. They, like their privileged friends, deem themselves the only Favourites of Heaven, and like them traverse sea and earth to make a proselyte, or, in their enmity to the truth, to slay better men than themselves,—whom they call Heretics. In one other feature, Catholics, also resemble the Scribes and Pharisees.—‘They reject the Commandments of God, that they may keep their own traditions. ‘Teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.’ These modern *Scribes and Pharisees* may well tremble, when they remember, that the only severe words the meek and lowly Saviour ever uttered, were addressed to their hypocritical brethren of Judea;—those who appeared outwardly ‘righteous to men,’ but who were ‘inwardly ravening wolves!’ and ‘whited sepulchres.’ Christ addressed them as a ‘Generation of vipers!’ and further said (confirming the similitude) ‘Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees! Hypocrites! for ye shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that were entering to go in!’

It is a significant fact, not quite compatible with an Infallible Church, that the construction of Heresy should so often have varied. In the earlier centuries, the penalties gradually attached to it, were, Penance, Ecclesiastical censure, or deprivation, and Excommunication. But as the Romish Clergy advanced in *power*, they increased in *vindictiveness*, and visited those whom they deemed Heretical, with imprisonment; forfeiture of goods to the Church; torture; and burning alive! Such was the weakness of Princes, at this period, and the deference paid to Priests, that, in compliance with the latter’s earnest importunity, the Civil Power not only made the crime of Heresy punishable with *Death*, but transferred to the Church the unrestricted right, (often to one Bishop, or Pastor,) to determine what was, or was not Heresy; and when the affirmative decision was made, without any other appeal, or decree, than that of the Clerical Judge, the unhappy Wight was handed over to the

Secular Arm, and in numerous cases at the Stake, met the reward of his alledged crime.

The duplicity of the Priest, or Priests, who had occasioned the Heretic's death, was here manifested. They knew the certainty of the culprit's fate, (from having instigated the law) if once convicted, and delivered over for execution to the Civil Arm, yet they hypocritically pretended to pity,—to pray,—and even to intercede for the sufferer! The Bishop's argument on these occasions was succinct and conclusive, comporting with his lordly spirit, 'Heretic! your doctrine is contrary to the decision of the *Church*, which is infallible; you therefore *must* be wrong. Renounce your *Error*, and adopt the Truth, as we propound it, or the Stake may instruct you better, but to late too profit!'—Some might be curious to learn what, at that time, constituted a crime of so flagitious a nature, as to require a man, or woman, as its desert, to be burnt to a cinder!—In this triumphant age of the *Church*, (that is the *Romish Church*) the crime of *Heresy* consisted in entertaining an opinion, magnified to a doctrine, in some degree at variance with the canons of the Priests! If the Bible, and the Bible alone had been to determine all questions of Heresy (such as Protestants affirm) and it *really* adjudged Death, as the penalty of error, there was not a Popish Priest, then living who would not have deserved the Stake with unspeakably more justice than the vast numbers, in that dark period, whose lives were sacrificed at the shrine of Romish bigotry and intolerance. The transactions of those days would furnish abundant evidence, that the Catholic was a true Heresiarch Church: yet more direct, and conclusive proofs in reserve. But independently of its Heretical character, the Papal Church, as represented by its Clergy, is equally distinguished for its inhumanity, not only in petty individual instances, but on comprehensive scales, where, in furtherance of their designs, or the establishment of their tenets, neither considerations of equity, nor any amount of human suffering, was ever allowed to offer the slightest obstruction.

There is no hesitation in affirming that *Romish Priests* have been the authors of the Chief Enormities with which Europe has been afflicted for many hundred years past ; and which has arisen out of their Bloody, Intolerant, and Persecuting Church ! Some readers, by whom the subject has been but imperfectly considered, may be startled at so direct a charge, but before they deny, or censure, they are requested to weigh well the reasoning and the incontestable statements about to be disclosed. The following serious proposition is now advanced, and which, in order to support the accusation, *must*, and, it is believed, will be abundantly verified.—*No description of men on the face of the earth (as to their general character) are so intuitively divested of all the ordinary feelings of humanity as ROMISH PRIESTS.* Other classes of men, from some momentary impulse, and in solitary instances, may display cruelty, (the associate and pioneer of all evil!) but its seat is not always, and wholly, in an obdurate heart. It is not the result of system. It springs not from attachment to violence ; whilst, on a retrospect, their most intemperate sallies are often followed by contrition ; but compunction for sanguinary deeds when exercised on those whom he regards as ‘ *Doctrinal Foes,*’ never for one moment enters into the mind of a Romish Priest.

None should shrink from hearing, or uttering the truth.—Language would be inadequate to express the baneful influences, inflicted by Romanism on the world. Instead of visiting man with the benign spirit of Christianity, it has fairly darkened, and desolated the earth ; (through an inscrutable Providence) like Plague and Pestilence ! The charge may be extended. From the fierce intolerance of *Romanism*, wherever invested with *Power*, it has become, in many of the most important views, immeasurably, more a *curse* than a *blessing* to mankind ! It may truly be affirmed, that, rather than tending to advance the Religion of the Bible ;—the Gospel of Christ, the Heresiarch Church of Rome has presented the most formidable obstructions to its taking root in the

earth. Instead of improving the condition of man physically, morally, or mentally;—which, Christianity, in its genuine Protestant form, is so calculated to effect, it has produced, in all these particulars, the direct reverse; so that if inquiry were made for the most corrupt, benighted, and least civilized portions of Europe, either at the present moment, or in past ages, there would be no hesitation in fixing on those Romish Countries, where Toleration and the Bible are, or have been excluded, and where the sway of the Priests, but especially of the *Jesuits* most preponderated. Romanism, both positively, and negatively, has made itself a bane to man. It has not only promoted evil, but has equally obstructed good. It has withered, to some extent, the discerning faculty; dried up the current of beneficence in the human heart, resisted knowledge; perpetuated ignorance; revelled in superstition, and by most of its institutions has encouraged rather than repressed *vice*. These are serious,—even solemn charges, but they admit of the amplest confirmation, as the Reader will perceive, by the following facts, reasonings, and interrogatory recapitulations.

Who so furiously persecuted the poor unoffending *Lollards*, in England, France, Flanders, and Germany?—men,—assailants of no Government; invaders of no private rights; peaceable citizens, who read their Bibles, and endeavoured to conform their conduct to its precepts; whilst they were kind neighbours, devoutly worshipped God, and adored their Saviour. But they went not to *Mass* and *Confession*! These were crimes, and liberties not to be endured by the Romish Church. It infringed on the authority of Rome! It recognized Private Judgment. It implied that Laics were competent to think. It superseded the Papal Power of regulating Human Faith by its own inflexible limits. To repress evils of such magnitude,—the '*Dogs of War*' were 'let slip!' The Priests,—the ever ready instruments of Cruelty and Oppression! raised the shout of '*Onslaught*!' when the innocent victims of Superstition and Bigotry were instantly hunted out by the Papists, calumniated, despoiled, imprisoned, without scrup

or limit, and mercilessly burnt alive!—Let the suffering *Lollards* answer, whether Romanism and its Priests, were to them a blessing, or a curse.*

Who, through implacable hate, invaded the tomb of the illustrious *Wickliffe*? even after the lapse of a hundred years!—when his bones were exhumed, and burnt, as an indication of the fate which would have awaited him, if the Apostle of Protestantism had not been screened by death from his Priestly Adversaries' implacable rage! What could have aroused this inveteracy, extending beyond the grave, and such as was never before displayed toward the greatest of Earth's criminals? It was the out-pouring of Popish wrath, which knows no limit!—It arose from the resolute testimony borne by the Noble Reformer against the crimes and falsities of the Papal Church.

Who was it that through a succession of ages persecuted the *Waldenses*, and *Albigenses*?—(as they had similarly treated, with such inveteracy and fatal rage, the virtuous *Lollards*) men who dwelt among the Alpine rocks, and other retired regions?—disregarding privations, and rejoicing,

* In *Lambeth Palace* there is at the present time a lofty Tower, called, '*The Lollard's Tower*,' where the *Papists*, long before the *Glorious Reformation*, confined the poor, persecuted—unoffending *Lollards*! The following is its description. The *Lollard's Prison* is reached by a small spiral staircase, of stone, much decayed. It is entered by a little pointed stone door-way, barely sufficient for one person to pass at a time, which door-way has an inner and outward door of strong oak, thickly studied with iron. The first objects that arrest the attention on entering, are the large *iron rings*, fastened to the walls. There are eight of these *rings*, breast high. The wainscoat, the *ceiling*, and every part, are entirely lined with oak, an inch and a half thick. The *Prison* itself is 12 feet long, 9 feet wide, and 8 feet high. It has two narrow apertures, or air holes, open to the winds of heaven. On the sides are seen words, in the old black letter, scarcely legible, with the Initials of Prisoners, and half sentences, and in one or two places, a *Crucifix* appears, scratched with some pointed instrument.—Many a *moving Tale* is connected with this *Tower*, but their memorials have ceased on Earth.—There is a record on high!

alas ! prematurely) in having found an asylum, unmolested by *Priests* the *most inveterate of all foes*,—where they might worship God according to their conscience, and live in peace. *Who* invaded these irreproachable Tribes, *year after year*, and *age after age* ; hunting them like wild beasts, and in the aggregate, *murdering thousands* ?—their crime alone, with the Bible in their hand, and the Spirit of God in their hearts, refusing to concur in Popish errors and superstitions ! *Who* were the perpetrators of these atrocious deeds ?—which, through the inhumanity of man to man, converted then, as it had often done before, and has since, (where Romanists held the sway) this lovely world of ours, into the precincts of the Infernal Regions ? The ready answer is, *Romish Priests* !—urging on *Romish Armies* ! The question is again asked, Were Papists here a blessing, or a curse to their race ?

Who, for hundreds of years, and in so many Nations of Europe, established the *Inquisition*,—the '*Holy Office* ? (Holy !) The most demoniac institution ever devised by man, at the instigation of Satan, and the record of whose crimes, amid cells immured in earth, and consecrated to torture and death, would almost identify it with Hell itself ! From whom did all these horrible atrocities proceed ? The answer is, *Romish Priests* !

Who was it that, in innumerable instances, persecuted, despoiled, and massacred so many *Jews*, in England ? (a People whom no right-minded man can look on without pity and wonder, united with reverence.) The answer is, *Romish Priests* !—*Who*, through a series of ages, burnt, as the amusement of gala days ! so many of the oppressed *Israelites* in Spain and Portugal ?—*Romish Priests* ! *Who* stirred up the spirit of persecution in the Secular Power, and burnt those eminently good men, *John Huss*, and *Jesome of Prague* ? (with our own *Wickliffe*) the morning stars of the Reformation !—men whose only crime consisted in the utterance of Truths, accordant with the *Bible*, but distasteful to *Rome* ?—who sent these Martyrs and unbending Christian

Heroes to the Stake?—Romish *Priests*!—*Who* lighted the fires in *Smithfield*, as well as through all England, making havoc of, and burning such multitudes of men and women, on account of their steadfast adherence to the Protestant Faith, including the pious Bishops, Hooper, Ridley, Latimer, and Cranmer; the Persecutors hurling their anathemas! and the Martyrs blessing?—Romish *Priests*!

Who, in the reign of *Elizabeth*, stimulated Philip of Spain to send a vast *Armada*, charged with diversified and horrid instruments of torture; first to punish, and then to subject England once more to Papal illumination and bondage!—the Assailants breathing vengeance toward Protestants, and prepared for every extreme of desolation and death? *Who* urged on the bigoted *Spanish Monarch* with such intensity of zeal to these hoped-for deeds of blood and slaughter?—Romish *Priests*?—(This Noble *Armada* was fitted out too early by three hundred years. Had it been reserved for our day, there *are*, peradventure, some few miserable beings, breathing English air, but strangers to English spirit, who would form a diversion in its favour, and hail an approach, which our more enlightened Ancestors, with their *heroic Queen* at their head, so strenuously, and triumphantly resisted!)

Who, in the reign of the Stuarts filled the English Jails with so many of the peaceable *Society of Friends*, for not violating their conscience? And *who*, in the same Reigns immured such hosts of the excellent *Puritans* in prisons?—Leighton, Henry, Baxter, Bunyan, Flavel, Allen, Hardcastle, and innumerable others; all sent to loathsome dungeons, to experience *High Commission* visitations;—to be mutilated, and to endure hardships, or excruciating tortures, merely for daring to judge *for themselves*, in their *own eternal interests*. The grossest immoralities might have been pardoned, but Papists regarded it then, as they do at this moment, an unpardonable crime, that any man should trust the Bible before the Priest. Those magnanimous spirits entertained

other views. Our brave Forefathers, to oppose unholy exactions, and to resist encroachments on their Religious Freedom, (less for themselves than for the sake of Truth, and to benefit future generations) 'took joyfully the spoiling of their goods.' Sustained by an invincible love of scripture and liberty, (not licentiousness,) they patiently endured—reproach, privation, their prison bars; and contentedly, though wearily, lingered out their years in darkness! *Who*, with hearts of steel, could have inflicted on such men all these merciless and long-continued barbarities? Romish Priests!—Such indeed, in heart and spirit, although for filthy lucre's sake, like too many in the present day, wearing hypocritically, the Episcopalian garb! Were Papists here, a blessing, or a curse to christians, and the world at large?

Who deluged Scotland with the blood of her noble-minded Covenanters? Concealed Romish Priests, operating upon, and acting covertly in conjunction with disguised Romish monarchs!

Who for an extended period, in Poland, Bohemia, Germany, and Spain, were the authors of all the Imprisonments, Banishments, Tortures, and Martyrdoms, of so many righteous men, of whom the world was not worthy; their alleged crime, loving their *Bibles*, and rejecting Popish exactions and errors?—Can the reply be varied?—Romish Priests!

Who, with such secrecy, and flinty hearts, projected the 'Gunpowder Plot,' in England, (now politely sought to be forgotten! But, by whom?) when explosives were gradually deposited under the Parliament-House, for the purpose of destroying utterly, in one unsuspected moment, the monarch with all the protestant lords and commoners of the land! Who were those monsters of iniquity, projecting, and glorying in the prospect of such a catastrophe?—Romish Priests!

Who caused in France the Massacre of St. Bartholomew? when in the single city of Paris so many thousands of Protestants (merely for being Protestants) were savagely murdered in cold blood, and, at a given signal, tens of thousands in the

different provinces of France ! This massacre, be it remembered, was so exulted in by the reigning Pope, (the Vicegerent of God upon earth !) that he directed *Te Deum* to be performed in the Pontifical city, in triumph over the destruction of so many heretics, as well as to perpetuate the memory of so glorious a deed ; ordering also commemorative medals to be struck, not only to testify his approval, but to stimulate the brotherhood to equal zeal, and like achievements in after years !—Who could have been the secret agents for perpetrating all these hideous enormities ? From the first tartarean thought, to the demon-like execution,—Romish Priests !

At whose plottings and contrivance was the Edict of Nantes repealed ? An edict which Henry the 4th executed, to secure to French Protestants, the peaceful exercise of their religion. Who caused the repeal of this Royal Edict, given under the most solemn sanctions ; and through the rescinding of which equitable law, eighty thousand of the best, and most intelligent men of France, were ordered in one fortnight to quit the land of their birth, or turn Papists.* These men being endued with firmness as well as worth, in so direful an alternative, refused to descend from their altitude, and worship the grovelling ‘Beast !’ The instigators of this, as of so many other deeds of darkness were—Romish Priests ! A refinement in cruelty now manifested itself. On adhering to their faith, these Protestants commenced their sorrowful journey, when the latter portion of the emigrants were suddenly detained, and became the victims of a cruel persecution ! The interference of Priests prevailed on the civil power to arrest the flying Protestants, in order to compel them to come in to the papal communion ; but when it was found that principle prevailed over fear, they were accused of obstinacy as well as heresy, and in consequence had their

* Mr. Macaulay, in his valuable History, states, ‘Fifty thousand Families.’ This would still increase the number of individuals to between two and three hundred thousand. The ancestor of the late eminent *Sir Samuel Romilly* was one of those fugitives.

property seized, whilst they themselves were thrown into prison, or otherwise sent to the galleys, where they were indiscriminately chained with the vilest of the vile; many of these oppressed sufferers being exemplary Protestant Ministers!—The Priests, the demons in human shape, who thus instigated deeds, congenial alone with Pandemonium, undertook to obtain from God! the pardon of all the king's sins, (Louis 14th,) on one only condition, that of his decreeing the effectual extirpation of all the Protestants of his realm;—those heretics, so offensive to God, the Virgin, and his Holiness the Pope!—Let the impartial spirit say; were Papists here a blessing, or a curse to humanity, and to man?

It is a striking proof of the deep policy, and underhand contrivances of Romish Priests, that when any violent or sanguinary deeds were to be perpetrated, they cautiously abstained from taking the prominent part. They stimulated, in secrecy, the prince, or the civil power to act for them, who consequently endured the discredit, and bore the responsibility; so that the worst deeds, (such as, the massacre of St. Bartholomew, and the repeal of the Edict of Nantes) were effected by their agency, while they, like the mainspring of a watch, remained out of sight!

Passing over all the horrors committed by Romanists, (always traceable to their Priests!) on Protestants in Italy, the question is asked, *who* projected, and directed the Irish Massacre, in the reign of the First Charles, when, through the whole of Ireland, one hundred thousand Protestants were savagely murdered by the Papists, on account merely of their contrariety of faith! *Who* were at the foundation, and secretly stimulated the Irish assassins to all these horrible atrocities?—Who could it be, but Romish Priests!—Men in every age alike, where their superstitions were concerned, strangers to mercy, and to whom cruelty became, and ever becomes, their second nature!—We speak with horror of the heathen's 'Habitations of cruelty,' but, when divested of restraint, and allowed to expand in the full exercise of their

principles, what cruelties can surpass, or equal those of Papists?—In given times, Roman Catholics from religious fanaticism, in Europe, have sacrificed more lives, than all the heathen world beside; with this difference; the cruelties of heathens arose chiefly from wars, that of catholics from religion! which they call Christian!—Where the Heathens, through bigotry, have destroyed one life, Romanists have destroyed twenty!

And here one remark is imperatively required. Romanists, or open or concealed Papists in the Protestant fold, are filled with indignant astonishment when the smallest unfavourable advertence is made to the Romish Church; to its present corruptions, or to its past crimes. At the least breath of assault, [the sounds of factitious sensibility are immediately heard; but especially from Priests! (even from Romish Priests!) In their most plaintive accents, they can expatiate *beautifully*, on the evils of an illiberal spirit! On the flagitious nature of cruelty!—On the virtues of forbearance!—On the excellence of moderation!—On the worth of charity! On the duties of forgiveness!—On the wrongs of persecution! On the criminality of fomenting discord!—of reviving dormant recollections!—of giving prominence to old grievances, and stirring up strife! &c. &c.

It is a significant fact that this writhing remonstrance always rises in intensity, proportionately as Truth sustains the accusation. These candidates for justice, and all the cardinal virtues, zealously advocate toleration toward themselves, and at the same moment require illimitable severity to alight on all those whose thoughts are not exactly cast in their own mould! Papists here assume a new character, where the rigid is succeeded by the flexible. When unable to disprove a charge, they suddenly become advocates for neutrality; while, in prospect of defeat, with their accustomed artful policy, they proclaim a truce! but their object is, time, and their operating motive, deception;—so that the leniency advocated is merely a subterfuge to lull suspicion,

that (in their vain conceit) they might lay the train, and more effectually undermine the Protestant Citadel! They are too resolutely attached to error, and blinded by superstition; as well as too conversant with their own internal springs of action, to conceive it possible that opposition to the Papacy can arise from Christian principles, or believe that the object of such exposure as the present is not to promote strife, nor wantonly to wound, but, rather, to defend Sacred Truth, to recall the wandering, and to warn the unwary.

The very Priests who are here so sensitively alive to the voice of rebuke, unscrupulously launch their loudest denunciations, and inflict their severest penalties (where they can) on, and against all who withhold from them and their church the deferential homage. Intolerance and persecution, to the death, have ever been the characteristics of the Roman Priesthood. Such is their contracted creed, that, without trenching on their principles, 'coercion' must be their motto. They are sworn to it from their cradle. Here in England, Romanists form a small minority. For the cause of religion, and the good of the land, may that little become less and less, (not by persecution, but the exercise of reason and argumentative exposure) till, like an eclipse, it finally withdraws, and the 'true light' succeeds! Here they are under restraint, but if the power of the Priests equalled their desires, according to all past experience, they would doubtless apply to their opponents in these realms, the old arguments of tortures and the stake: or at least, a residence in the torturing *inferno* of Loyola. At the ominous name of Loyola a confirmation is suggested of the deep-rooted deception of the Romish Church.

Loyola might almost be called the founder of the 'Holy office!' that bloody tribunal! as well as the first General of the merciful and truth-loving Order of the Jesuits. In other respects, his fame had slept, like his few paltry writings, for nearly a hundred years, when the Roman

Hierarchy became sensible of the immense advantage they had derived from the 'Society of Jesus,' as well as from the whole system of the Inquisition. To testify their gratitude, for benefits so preeminent, they determined on canonizing the noble Spaniard; on which occasion, in their Letters Patent, they recapitulated his various Miracles. A Book of the most ludicrous, though *mournful* fictions might be formed from the twelve-volume Memoirs of *Popish Saints*. Human invention must have been violently stretched in these marvellous narratives, surpassing in sublime wonders, infinitely, the tame 'Baron' and 'Arabian Nights!' yet the whole is embraced by the capacious faith of Catholics, who are, generally speaking, ignorant of the *Scriptures*, compared with their close study of *Butler* and *Platina*.

A few of the Miracles affirmed of Popish Saints are here given.

St. Felix. 'To screen himself from his heretical pursuers, crept through a hole in a wall, when, immediately after, the hole was miraculously filled up with *Spiders' Webs*. The heretics seeing this, on coming up to the spot, naturally concluded that the fugitive Saint could not have passed in that direction, and so the holy man escaped.'

St. Maurus. 'St. Maurus was favoured by God with the gift of miracles. *Placidus* a fellow Monk, going one day to fetch water, fell into the Lake, and was carried the distance of a bow-shot from the bank. *St. Benedict* saw this, in spirit, in his cell, and bade *St. Maurus* run and draw him out. *St. Maurus* obeyed;—walked upon the water without perceiving it, and dragged out *Placidus* by the hair, without sinking in the least himself!'

St. Raymund. 'King James took this Saint to the Island of Majorca, and, contrary to his will, detained him there. The Saint walked boldly to the waters, spread his cloak upon them, tied one corner of it to a staff for a sail, and having made the sign of the cross, stepped upon it, without fear, and was wafted with such rapidity, that in six hours he reached the harbour of Barcelona!'

The following are some of the vaunted Miracles of St. FRANCIS XAVIER, extracted from the Life of the Saint.

1. A Catechist had been stung by a serpent and died. The Saint restored him to life.
2. A Child was drowned in a Pit. The Saint restored it.
3. A young man died of a fever. The Saint restored him.
4. A young woman died of a fever. The Saint restored her.
5. At Travancore, in India, the Almighty bestowed on St. Francis the gift of tongues. 'He spoke well the language of those barbarians without having learnt, so that he was enabled miraculously to instruct them.'
6. An army of plunderers burst into Travancore. 'The Saint marched up to them, waving a crucifix, and ordered them to depart in the name of the living God. They understood him, and instantly withdrew.'
7. 'At a village near Travancore, a man had been buried the day before. St. Francis ordered the grave to be opened, and the lid of the coffin to be raised, when the body was found offensive from decay. The Saint *commanded* the dead body to arise; when he instantly arose, vigorous, and in perfect health.'
8. 'On the same coast, St. Francis met the corpse of a young man, (a christian,) whom his friends were conveying to the grave. He restored him to life.'
9. 'In Japan a child's body, which was swollen and deformed, St. Francis made straight and beautiful.'
10. St. Francis healed a leper in Japan.
11. A pagan young maid of quality that had been dead a whole day, St. Francis raised to life.
12. St. Francis had lost the gift of tongues; but at *Aman-guchi* it was miraculously restored, by which he was enabled to preach to the *Chinese*; a tongue which he had never learnt.
13. At Malacca St. Francis restored to life a young man who was dead; his name was Francis Ciavos.
14. St. Francis on his voyage to Goa, wrought 'miracles.'

15. St. Francis died in a ship, 1552. He was buried in his sacerdotal robes,—the coffin being filled with lime, that the flesh might be consumed, and the bones be conveyed to Goa, and be preserved as relics. When however the coffin was opened, the Saint was found uncorrupted. His face ruddy and fresh-coloured. ‘His corpse also, ‘exhaled an odour so fragrant and delightful, that the ‘most exquisite perfumes came nothing near it!’
16. ‘Ingulfed in deep meditation, St. Francis was sometimes found suspended in the air, with beams of glory round his countenance, as many ocular witnesses deposed!’

These are the monstrous lies with which hypocrites in the Romish Church replenish their ranks among the ignorant, and exact from others, who should know better, a credence which is never withheld. The whole system of popery is founded on superstition and falsehood; exhibiting the mighty range of Catholic Priestcraft, reckless imposition, and abject credulity; such as ought to excite a feeling of revolt from every man of sense, honour, or piety. What opinion must be entertained of a Church, which, to establish its authority, can resort to such base expedients? The indignation is augmented by recollecting that these impudent fables are still insisted on by Catholics, whose zeal in their defence appears to rise, in proportion as the hearts of others sicken, and their understandings revolt.

All these miracles, be it remembered, were performed professedly, in a remote part of the world, amongst a barbarous people, and unattested by witnesses entitled to a moment's credit, unless the authority of those can be deemed admissible, who solemnly affirmed they had seen their master, St. Francis, in the heights of his devotion, miraculously suspended in mid-air!

One occurrence will always reduce *Saint Francis*, to a low standard in the estimation of all who believe

that true religion does not extinguish in the human breast all the social and relative affections. *Francis Xavier* was about to sail on a missionary expedition to the East Indies. A heart endued with the ordinary feelings of humanity, in the prospect of such a voyage, and the uncertainty of a return, would infallibly have obeyed the strong impulse of nature, and have taken a tender leave of the relatives who loved, and particularly of *her* who had borne and cherished him. On the contrary, this delectable and model *Saint*, (whose praise after *Mary*, the infant Catholic is first taught to lisp,) with the coldness of an arctic winter, passed his mother's door in the manifestation of stoical indifference; remarking, 'I shall defer the sight of my relations, till I visit them in heaven.' These gross enormities throw suspicion not only on the life and character of St. Francis, but on all the other canonizations of Rome.

The opulence of the Romish Church in the article of *Relics* is well known. The manner in which they were obtained has sometimes been doubtful, but on other occasions the evidence has been so clear, in respect of time, place, and circumstance, as to leave no question on any *Catholic's* mind. One of these incontestable instances occurred in the acquisition of *St. Stephen*, the Proto-Martyr's bones, as recorded in Butler's Saints. (Vol. 8. P. 56.) The same fortunate occasion brought to light, also, the bones of *Nicodemus*, and *Gamaliel*. The following is the interesting narrative.

'At *Caphargamala*, about twenty miles from Jerusalem, a venerable priest resided, named *Lucian*. On Friday the 3rd of December, An. Dom. 415, he was sleeping, 'half awake,' when he saw a tall comely old man of a venerable aspect with a long white beard, clothed in a white garment, edged with small plates of gold, marked with crosses, and holding a golden wand in his hand.' This person approached *Lucian*, and calling him *thrice* by his name, bade him go to Jerusalem, and tell Bishop John to come and open the Tomb in which his (the speaker's) own remains lay.

Lucian asked his name. 'I am' said he, '*Gamaliel*. I instructed *Paul* in the law, and on the east side of the monument lieth *Stephen*, who was stoned by the Jews, without the north gate. His body was left there exposed one day, and one night, but was not touched by *birds or beasts*. I exhorted the faithful to carry it off in the night time, which when they had done, I caused it to be conveyed secretly to my house in the country, where I celebrated his funeral rites forty days, and then caused his body to be laid in my own tomb, to the eastward. *Nicodemus*, who came to Jesus by night, lieth there in another coffin. He was excommunicated by the Jews for following Christ, and banished out of Jerusalem. Whereupon I received him into my house in the country, and there maintained him to the end of his life. After his death, I buried him honourably near *Stephen*. *Stephen* lieth at the entrance of the sepulchre. The second basket contains *Nicodemus*; and there I am buried!

Lucian, fearing to be deemed an impostor, prayed, that if the vision was from God, he might be favoured with it a second, and a *third* time. On the Friday following, *Gamaliel* appeared again to him and repeated,—'*Stephen* lies at the entrance of the Sepulchre; the second is *Nicodemus*. Mine is contiguous. *Lucian* still hesitated, when *Gamaliel* appeared the *third* time. (Ghosts are remarkably partial to No. 3.) and threatened. *Lucian* being intimidated, hastened off to John, Bishop of Jerusalem, who, at the information, wept tears of joy, and bade him go and search for the Relics. On the next day, *Lucian*, and all the inhabitants, advanced toward the appointed spot, when they were met by *Migettius* a holy monk, who said, 'You have seen *Gamaliel*. Look for the relics, not where you are going, but at *Debatalia*.' To *Debatalia* they went, and there they, rejoicing, found the three precious treasures! On two of the coffins were engraven in large Syriac characters, the names of *Stephen* and *Nicodemus*. The third, of course, contained *Gamaliel*. *Lucian* immediately sent off for Bishop John, who was at *Diospolis*,

who with the Bishop of Sebaste, and the Bishop of Jericho, hastened to the place.

St. Stephen's coffin was first opened. The earth shook ! ' when there came out of the coffin such an agreeable odour, ' that no one remembered to have ever smelt any thing like it.' There was a vast multitude present, and on this occasion, no less than *seventy three* persons, who were afflicted with divers distempers, were restored to sound health by the Saint's relics. ' Some were freed from evil spirits, others cured of scrophulous tumours of various kinds ; others of fevers, fistulas, the bloody flux, the falling sickness, head aches, and pains in the bowels.'—They kissed the holy relics, and then shut them up. (The *wood* after four hundred years, partaking of the same miraculous preservation !

Some of the bones were left at Caphargamala, and Lucian the finder obtained a portion. St. Stephen's body was reduced to *dust*, but this was equally precious. Avitas, a Spanish priest, then present, obtained a little of this dust, with one of the Saint's small bones, and sent them into Spain ; and other portions found their way ' with great devotion ' into Europe and Africa. But the largest portion of this inestimable treasure was conveyed by Bishop John, with triumph, amid singing psalms, and hymns, to the church of Sion at Jerusalem. This translation, so memorable in relic history, was performed on the 26th of December, 415.

By such means the catholic clergy have obtained their relics ! ' Nothing is too gross for priests to affirm, or too monstrous for catholics to believe.'

But to return to *Loyala*, to whom so many Miracles are assigned. He began his career marvellously. He was kneeling before the Image of the Virgin, when he heard a preternatural noise. The house shook. The windows of his chamber were shaken. The wall was rent !—On another occasion Loyola saw the Mother of God environed in light, holding the Infant Jesus in her arms. (Notwithstanding the heights-

of his devotion, he once heard a *Moriscoe* speak, not with due reverence of the Virgin, when, he says, he deliberated whether he should not ‘*Kill him !*’)—On another occasion, a man had hanged himself, but Loyola prayed over his corpse till he recovered. In a little chapel, when on his way to the Pope, Jesus Christ appeared to the Saint, in light unspeakable, and ‘sweetly said.’ ‘Ignatius, I will be favourable to thee at Rome.’—*Nicholas Lanoy* affirmed that on one occasion when Loyola was saying Mass, he saw a flame of fire on his head.’ Also, *Pretonius*, a Roman Physician, declared that, sitting in his own dark chamber, the shutters being closed, on the entrance of the holy man, a dazzling light proceeded from him that illuminated the whole room.—Another veracious disciple affirmed that once when Loyola was praying, he saw him supernaturally drawn up a full foot from the ground !

‘*One Hundred*’ other miracles are recorded of this eminent Popish Saint ; (see Bayle) recognised even by the *Council of Trent*. For the astonishment of *Chirurgeons*, and others, one more of these prodigies will be here added to the above ;—not performed by the *Living Saint*, but by one of his *precious Relics* ! ‘Isabel Rebelles had broken her thigh, and was attended for forty days, unavailingly, by a skilful physician and surgeon, but the poor women grew worse, and was now at the point of death, when it occurred to some humane mind, to try a Relic of *St. Loyola*, which on being applied to the diseased limb, a perfect cure was instantly effected, when the Patient dressed herself, walking nimbly away, and felt no further effect from her disaster !’—‘not even at new moons, or in the dampest season !’—But the worst feature in the Jesuits, so far as humanity is concerned, is their encouragement of, and superintendence over the *Inquisition* ; so that incidentally, Loyola is connected with an *Institution*, which has caused more tears, and destroyed more victims, than the sword of Cæsar, or the scimeter of Mahomet, Nadir-Shah, or Kouli-Khan, and against which, the earth, which it has deluged

with blood, sends forth to the present day, an accusatory voice, almost audible ! even this man, this Ignatius Loyola ! conspicuously shines in the lying calendar of Rome's Canonizations ! There are scarcely any transactions astounding and out of the course of nature, not related of the Catholics' immortalized Saints. One of them amongst a thousand bones promiscuously scattered, could intuitively fix at once on the genuine relic ! He could also instantly ascertain a piece of the true cross, out of a hundred counterfeits ! This faculty was of inestimable value to the church, at a period when relics were so highly esteemed,—so miraculously multiplied and sold at so costly a price ! Another Saint, whose tongue had been cruelly extracted by infidels, still retained the power of talking as well without that little instrument as with it ! But scarcely any one of their marvels exceeds that of the celebrated St. Swithin, who, with rather a capricious taste for the humbler class of achievements, and to excite the admiration of posterity, restored to their original form and consistence, an amalgam of broken eggs ! Innumerable miracles of a like kind are recorded of the Romish Saints, and as these have all been verified, and sanctioned by Popes and Conclaves, they must be, and are cordially admitted by all good Catholics !

It may further be noticed of this miserable man Loyola. He does not appear to have been a hypocrite, (like so many of his associates and successors,) but rather one of that dark-minded malign class, recorded of old, who could commit and recommend the most shuddering enormities, under the impression, that thereby they did God service ; and none can doubt but that deeds like his, even of the most horrible description, were often perpetrated by gloomy enthusiasts in the Romish Church, who appeared to believe that in the promotion of a Catholic object, good, or bad, (recommended by the church) the extinction of every human feeling for Heretics was the highest recommendation to Mary, and the grand road to heaven !

The subject of the Inquisition is so important, and so fully exhibits the Romanist's character, that some further remarks on it will here be made, especially as it has been extolled by Catholics as the 'lever' with which they were to move the world. In this institution the most revolting barbarities have been inflicted; to an extent beyond computation, and through a space of nearly three hundred years. All were seized whose faith did not precisely accord with that of the Holy Office; and if they persisted in their hostility, that is, refused to own what their hearts denied, the punishments adjudged were, (at the will of the Priest) imprisonment, protracted starvation, torture, or death! a vindictiveness and ferocity unequalled through the whole range of the heathen world. Nor is any fact more undeniable, (short of demonstration) than, that the tyranny of Popish Priests has no parallel, even in the records of political despotism! The sympathies deemed inherent in man, if ever possessed by Priests, have, by their heart-withering religion, been effectually rooted from their breast; proved by innumerable evidences, and none more conclusively than the Inquisition, so cordially adopted by the Papal Church; whose members exerted their utmost ingenuity to devise new modes for inflicting pain of body, and agony of mind! These inhuman cruelties, to aggravate the evil, were perpetrated on mere sentimental criminals! their accusers priests! their judges priests! and their executioners priests! Whilst all these enormities were committed, not in the open face of day, but in secrecy and darkness; in gloomy recesses, and rayless chambers, where no appeal was made but to callous hearts; no remonstrance addressed, but to spirits, cold and hard as the stony cells around them; and where, in seasons of relaxation from torture, no sound was heard by the victim, but the step of the inquisitor, or his own clanking chain, or the deep groan of some adjacent sufferer, if possible, more wretched than himself!

The three principal European Inquisitions were those of

Rome, Lisbon, and Madrid. Every reader must be familiar with the disclosures made respecting the two latter places, where barbarities were committed by Romish Priests on the largest scale, and of the most horrifying nature. The Ecclesiastical Authority in Spain and Portugal, unhappily had superseded the Civil, so that the resentments of the church were exercised without control; and this exemption from secular restraint enabled the Clerical Inquisitors to display their peculiar, if not felicitous, mode of recommending Christianity,—and how, by the abandonment of pity, they inculcated its sacred and humane precepts! According to all concurrent testimony, these lordly Inquisitors, where they entertained a suspicion of Heresy, despatched at midnight their officers to the residence of the aggressor, knocking at the door with the ominous announcement, that the ‘Holy Office,’ required immediately the father, the mother, the son, or the daughter! when resistance would have been as hazardous as unavailing. Not a remonstrance, not a breath of opposition was heard. The suspected enters the dark sedan, amid the suppressed agony of relatives, and alone is borne within the grating and ponderous gates of the Inquisition, where the cowed judges are formally sitting round the administrative board, in order to interrogate the suspected culprit;—the dim lamp burning, and grim menial Priests around, waiting, with alacrity, to execute the given sentence, whether of imprisonment, torture, or death!’

Multitudes were admitted within the precincts of these Demoniac Aceldamas, of whom nothing afterwards was ever heard. The Inquisitors had within their own sequestered and gloomy walls, convenient burial spots, and charnel houses, and lime for the rapid consumption of bodies; whilst their interior torture rooms allowed not the groan, nor the cry, nor the screech, to be heard, except by ears on which, from perpetual repetition, they fell regardless. The cruelties here exercised, are unutterable and inconceivable; yet the nearest relatives dared not to complain, or even inquire; or

the same fate, they well knew, would probably become their own. To augment the enormity, the suspected Heretic was often tortured into the admission of crime, (that crime opposition in some particular to the Papacy, or the 'Holy Office,') and then doubly tortured for the admission. The most fervid imagination would fail to comprehend the horrors connected with this bloody Tribunal, or the universal dread of families, lest, at the dead of night, the Holy Office should send its myrmidons with the imperative demand for one of its number.

Such was the terror excited by these agents and faithful auxiliaries of the Romish Church, that though their baneful influence was known, and their character detested, yet fear of offending the Church, so restrained expression, that, but for accident, the full extent of their enormity might never have been known. The discovery at Lisbon was made by a popular movement, when the populace broke into the Inquisitors' infernal abodes, and laid bare the secrets of the Prison-House. They there beheld the horrifying implements for torturing the victims of the Church's displeasure; when the secular indignation became so intense and general, as to obtain the instant abolition of this Priestly expedient for protecting the 'Only True Church.' But though suppressed at Lisbon, it still triumphantly flourished at Madrid. The Inquisition here existed on a still larger scale, and from the dread it exercised over a superstitious, tame, and priest-ridden people, presented fair claims to perpetuity. For the solace of humanity, however, the French (till expelled by our illustrious Wellington) during the late Peninsular War, became masters of Madrid. The one good thing which they did in Spain, was the throwing open to public inspection the Loyolian region of horrors. The indignant inhabitants now liberated the pale, miserable, hopeless victims of the Priests; while, aghast, they beheld the murky cells, the deep traces of blood on the ground, and the shuddering language of despair on the walls; with the rings, the chains, the racks by which

the Holy Office visited those who dared to question their Infallible Guides. From this moment, it is hardly necessary to state, one general execration of the Inquisitors prevailed in Madrid; and it may confidently be predicted, that whatever change may occur in Spain, it will never include the re-establishment of the Inquisition.

This horrible institution still existed in the Pontifical City, on a scale not inferior in extent or magnificence to that in the Spanish Capital. Numerous citizens, through a succession of ages, who were here incarcerated, and, experimentally learnt how terrible was Clerical wrath, when suspicions were excited,—not of treason,—not of murder, but, in the views of the Papal Clergy, of a far more heinous crime,—that of Heresy! the interpretation of which rested solely with the Priests. The man or woman, the young or old, who had attracted the notice of the Holy Office, from doubts of unsoundness in the Catholic Faith, were hurried off to Loyola's fearful establishment, where they endured a rigid ordeal; and woe to the culprit if he failed in one iota of the Holy Junta's requirements. Many unfortunates were perpetually brought in from the provinces, charged with hostility to the only True Church, whose fate no one knew. The Priests affirmed that they were treated tenderly, and were only conveyed to the Inquisition for better instruction. Subsequent facts showed that a large proportion of these Probationers and hopeful Neophytes were inhumanly tortured by beings in the shape of men, who appeared to derive their chief joy from human suffering.

It not unfrequently is found, that evils in their ultimate effects conduce to good. The true complexion of the Papal Inquisition has been brought to light by the late insurrection at Rome. From these disclosures, should Popes, Cardinals, and Priests once more, at least for a little time, establish their sway, and send their thunders from the Vatican, whatever institutions they may form of an Anti-Christian kind, they will never, it is presumed, succeed in reinstating the

Inquisition; that Priestly expedient for promoting religion, or rather for combining against the Papacy, in all impartial breasts, every ennobling feeling of the human heart.

The following graphic description of 'Loyola's Receptacles of Misery,' at Rome, (not more revolting than those of Lisbon and Madrid!) has recently been sent in a letter from Rome, to the Editor of a popular Journal; and which statements have been abundantly confirmed. It cannot be too generally read, and which may be somewhat promoted by its appearance in this place.

Rome, March 31st, 1849.

* * 'Talking of excavations, I visited this morning the works going on in the Subterranean Vaults of the Holy Office, and was not a little horrified at what I saw with my own eyes, and held in my own hands. Though I have been familiar with every thing in and about Rome for a quarter of a century, I confess I never had any curiosity to visit the Inquisition; taking it for granted that every thing was carried on there fairly and honestly. Besides the place itself is out of the beaten track of all strangers, and a sort of *cul de sac* behind Saint Peter's, where it naturally retired to perform its blushing operations. I was struck with the outward appearance of civilization and comfort displayed by the building, which owes its erection to Pius V, author of the last Creed; but, on entering, the real character of the concern was no longer dissimulated. A range of strongly-barred prisons formed the ground-floor of a quadrangular court; and these dark receptacles I found were only the preliminary stage of probation, intended for new comers, as yet uninitiated into the Eleusinian Mysteries of the Establishment. Entering a passage to the left, you arrive at a smaller court yard, where a triple row of small barred dungeons rise from the soil, upwards, somewhat after the look of a three decker, accommodating about sixty prisoners. These barred cages have been fully manned, for there is a supplementary row constructed at the back of the quadrangle on the ground floor, which faces a large garden. All these cellular contrivances have strong iron rings let into the masonry, and in some there is a large stone firmly embedded in the centre with a similar massive ring. Numerous inscriptions, dated centuries back, are dimly legible on the admission of light; the general tenor being assertions of Innocence—'*Iadio ci liberi de lingua calumniatrice.*'—'*Is domonico Gazzote vissi qui anni 18.*'—'*Calumniatores mendaces exterminantur.*' I read another, somewhat longer, the drift of which is, '*The caprice or wickedness of man cannot exclude me from thy Church, O Christ, my only hope.*'

'The officer in charge led me down to where the men were digging in the vaults below. They had cleared a downward flight of steps, which was choked up with old rubbish, and had come to a series of dungeons, under

‘the vaults; deeper still, and which immediately brought to my mind the Prisons of the Doge, under the Bridge of Sighs, at Venice; only here, there were surpassing horrors!—I saw embedded in old masonry, unsymmetrically arranged, five skeletons in various recesses, and the clearance had only just begun. The period of their insertion in this spot must have been more than a century and a half. From another vault, full of skulls, and scattered human remains, there was a shaft about four feet square, ascending perpendicularly to the first floor of the building, and ending in a passage off the hall of the chancery, where a trap door lay between the Tribunal and the way to a suite of rooms destined for one of the officials. The object of this shaft could admit but of one surmise. The ground of the vault was made up of decayed animal matter, a lump of which held embedded in it, a long *‘silken lock of hair,’* as I found by personal examination, as it was shovelled up from below. Why, or wherefore, with a large space of vacant ground lying outside the structure, this Charnel House should be contrived under the dwelling, passes my ken. But that is not all. There are two large subterranean lime-kilns, if I may so call them, shaped like a bee hive, in masonry, filled with large calcined bones, forming the substratum of two other chambers on the ground floor, in the immediate vicinity of the very mysterious shaft above mentioned. Had I not the evidence of my own senses, I should never have dreamt of such appearances in a prison of the ‘Holy Office;’ being thoroughly sick of the nonsense that for years has been put forth by partizan pens. But here the thing will become serious, for to-morrow, the whole population of Rome are publicly invited by the authorities to come and see, with their own eyes, one of the results of entrusting power to Clerical Hands.”—Any comment on this narrative would weaken its effect on the reader.

With the ink scarcely dry in writing the above, news has arrived, Sept. 18, 1849, that the French, by the strong arm of power, have once more brought back the Priests to the ‘Eternal City.’ As might have been expected, instead of manifesting a conciliatory spirit, (with true clerical rage) the cry of ‘vengeance!’ was the first word uttered by the Triumvirate Cardinals! The Inquisition at Rome not having been destroyed by the populace, like the Bastille at Paris, the Pope’s vindictive representatives are once more peopling these horrible dungeons with the victims of their passion. One of the first objects on which their indignant fury alighted was Dr. Achilli. He had been wholly detached from the Revolutionary movement, but another heinous offence was charged on him. He had been adjudged guilty, on the clearest evi-

dence, of a crime, inexpressible in the Priest's view. He had been convicted of—circulating the Scriptures!—(the true cause of the clerical hostility.) If he should escape unscathed of life, or limb, from the infuriated Priests, and from these regions of torture and death, he will be more fortunate than thousands of his predecessors! But the end is not yet. There is a righteous God! and in his own way and time, such enormities cannot remain unpunished! Rome presents a memorable example of the effects of Priestly sway. Had it been an equitable,—a paternal government: had it possessed the hearts of the community, and its maxims been accordant, not with the name merely, but with the spirit of christianity, it is impossible that the affections of a whole people could have become so alienated from all that is sacerdotal, and have recoiled so universally from the intolerable sway of Popes, Cardinals, and Priests!

After a due consideration of the preceding pages, a fresh appeal may be made to every dispassionate mind, whether Romanism has not proved itself, so far as religion and humanity are concerned, (and what subjects so important!)—it must be said,—a curse rather than a blessing to man. Consistently with such presumed admission, before Christianity, in its pure Protestant, Bible form, can be greatly extended, Romanism must fall, and be regarded as the most wide-spreading, and, on the whole, the most pernicious heresy that ever desolated the Church of Christ! The first indication that the inhabitants of Catholic countries are advancing in discernment and sacred prosperity will be, their utter rejection of the Triple Crown, (with all the paraphernalia of Popery) but for whose blighting effects the rose of Sharon would have blossomed far more extensively than it has yet done, and, in the best sense, the world, to an unlimited extent, have become regenerated.

But to be more specific in this serious charge. Let the reflecting reader consider the rapid extension of christianity, in the first ages of the Church, when the Bible, in all its

native grandeur, and unsophisticated sense, was the admitted standard of faith, whilst its circulation among believers, so far as it was possible in a manuscript age, was encouraged, not restricted. Let him consider that, at this season, no selfish and powerful combination of Priests existed to pervert its meaning; that meaning what the words implied, and as they were understood by those who originally received them:—so that truth—thus unencumbered, and relying on its own intrinsic excellence, surmounted every obstruction. Accompanied as it was with the divine superintendence and favour, it addressed itself to every man's conscience, and without extraneous aid, at length triumphed over the inveterate polytheism of the whole heathen, or what was called, civilized world.

But now a deadly foe was fast advancing. This foe was the Roman Catholic Church, with all its Priests, its falsehoods, and its frippery! One encroachment after another arose. Error sanctioning power, and power sustaining error, till, finally, the Papacy became a dominant institution; establishing its own laws; throwing a veil over the Scriptures; grasping at riches, and honours; investing itself with exclusive rights and immunities, and adopting forms, ordinances, and doctrines unknown to, or alien from the Bible; delighting, it may be said, in complexity, rather than in the simplicity of the Gospel. Thus under a combination of hostile agencies, the professed friends of truth became its bitterest adversaries; so that a withering influence rested on the church, and clouds progressively overcast the morning which had opened so fair.

The Papacy now rapidly increased in wealth, power, and temporal prosperity, and, in the same proportion, advanced in depravation, till, at length, it settled down into a complete Heresiarch, absolute, Ecclesiastical system, such as we see it in the present day. Romanists now began to exhibit the effect which invariably attends on unrestrained clerical power. They fenced round the laws which they had made, with pains

and penalties!—peremptorily declaring what men should, or should not believe!—What an insufferable spiritual tyranny was this, that a class and caste of proud—domineering—self-elected Priests should dictate to all around, what, and what alone they should believe! That this arrogant clerical body should first wrest the Bible from their flock, hungering for the bread of life, and then imperiously force on them tenets, and practices, contrary to the sacred records, and opposed to their deliberate sense of right; and that on the penalty of severe corporal infliction, extending even to bondage and to death! To judge of such enormity, and that Protestants of the present day might learn to sympathize with their priestly-oppressed forefathers, let them only realize these grinding laws—rigidly enforced on themselves.

The haughty Romish Clergy now laid a still broader basis for their assumptions and exactions. They effectually assaulted the citadel of human faith, by establishing, as a normal principle, and an incontrovertible truth, their own infallibility! This point obtained, they might affirm what they would, and with the Bible unknown to the Laity, what counteracting, or modifying power, could be brought to bear against them? Standing in so elevated a position, the whole body of the people were taught, as the first of duties, to view the Pope and the Priesthood as beings of a higher order, and literally to regard them, as—what they affirmed themselves to be, the Favourites, and Vicegerent of God upon earth! Having thus obtained, surreptitiously, their uncontrolled supremacy, they now began with additional boldness to execute their mandates, when, all who hazarded a word, construable into opposition to the allowed faith, endured, without the possibility of escape, the crushing weight of Popish indignation.

Englishmen at the present day in their Protestant strength, although once subjected to the iron and bloody reign of Papists, need fear no recurrence of their bondage. The remembrance of their thralldom, and their sufferings, has left

too corroding an impression on their minds ever to allow, for one moment, the ascendancy of their own implacable foes, and equally those of true religion. But though Protestant Britons may happily smile at Priestly threats, and the war-trumpet of Rome, the servile slaves of the Papacy, hear it aghast; to whom it comes with the sound and force of a thunderbolt. This dread, with the domination that excited it, have both seen their culminating point; and ere long will decline, not without contumelious reproaches, in proportion as men break through the toils of prejudice, and, with improved faculties, learn to distinguish truth from error,

There is one other striking feature and peculiarity in Romanism. The austerity with which Romanists punished dissentients from their Church, even in the smallest circumstances, tended, as they wickedly calculated, if not to paralyze the mind, to repress all inquiry; and therefore the Laity of that benighted period, the few who knew better, for the most part, sailed passively with the stream, sighing bitterly and ardently for happier times, when the Priestly shackles which then fettered the human intellect, should be scornfully rent asunder. In that season of darkness, they knew that to hesitate in admitting the whole of the Priests' dogmas would arouse suspicions of Heresy, the least pardonable of crimes! while, overtly, to resist them, would entail imprisonment, or the stake. In this domineering sway of the Papacy, as an inevitable result, the class of thoughtful minds who look only on the surface of things, rather than in the Bible, not daring to express their thoughts, yielded a titular compliance with externals, and became secret Infidels;—(an effect which the extravagances of Catholicism has so generally produced among the intelligent in Papal countries.) The lower classes of the people, at this time, were involved in the profoundest ignorance, and, as the necessary consequence, were brutalized by the grossest superstitions; their minds being prepared to receive with the most concurrent acquiescence, whatever crude notions Duplicity might teach.

From these various considerations. it is again asked, can any impartial spirit resist the conviction, that the Roman Catholic Church, instead of promoting, has mightily retarded the spread of genuine Christianity? There are still some, who, while they utterly condemn the perversions and absurdities of Romanism, still look on it with moderated aversion, on account, as they fancy, of some attendant civil advantages it once possessed. This is completely changing the ground of approval, from a Clerical to that which is Secular. Let not any such merits, fairly established, be denied to Catholics; but this may be conceded, while all the transcendently important charges directed against the Papacy, as a corrupt Ecclesiastical Polity, remain in their full force.

It is allowed that reflections on any religious community are to be deprecated, yet this admission must not interfere with the expression of truths, in which the interests of men, here and hereafter, are vitally concerned. From this consideration, it is affirmed, that, of all the flagrant departures of Romanists from the Biblical example and direction, none exceeds their treatment of those who dared to entertain opinions not quite accordant with the decisions of Rome. The Apostles felt a confidence in advancing their precepts and tenets, such as none others could feel, and who might peremptorily and authoritatively have addressed Catechumens and Opponents, but they were solicitous to set an example of forbearance, and not by harshness, in the estimation of others, to sully the purity of their faith. They were satisfied to appeal to men's rational faculties. Their injunction was, 'Consider what I say!' They might, and did, argumentatively, enforce their commands, but it was marked by tenderness, even in inculcating the doctrines they were inspired to teach. The utmost severity which Saint Paul instructed his converts to testify toward those who pertinaciously rejected the 'Word,' or discredited their profession, was, to abstain from their 'company.' And lest this direction should conduce to austerity, he qualified his expressions by subjoining

‘Yet count them not as an enemy, but admonish them as a friend.’ Romish Priests, on the contrary, against all who opposed their mandates, in any shape or degree, (however monstrous and opposed to Scripture) breathed forth against them fire and slaughter! The Apostle’s directions were, ‘Be piteous!’ ‘Be courteous!’ ‘Be patient to all men!’ The Romish Priests’ imperative language, on the contrary, was, and is, ‘Pity and courteousness avaunt! Have patience with none; but to penal and deadly severities subject all who dare to think other than as we prescribe!’ In this spirit, Papists, through a long career, ruled the consciences of men, and revelled in the hardening possession of pomp and power. Forgetful of the Bible, and its sacred injunctions, with fierce intolerance they relentlessly scattered around them death and destruction; even on all who implicitly acquiesced not in their decrees, or who in the least questioned their authority; while they established, as inherent features of the Catholic Church, their own showy, but heathenish and injurious rites and ceremonies. It might almost be affirmed, that they resisted every ray emanating from Scripture; as though with a malevolent enmity, they had resolved, that, while groping in darkness themselves, none around them should enjoy the light of day.

The writer will now take a rapid glance at the Papal Church, its tendencies and ordinances, when every sentiment previously expressed, respecting what must be called, ‘The Roman Apostacy,’ will receive (it is believed) abundant confirmation. But other advantages are anticipated. It may arrest some beguiled spirits meditating a forlorn pilgrimage to Rome! With the favour also of the Almighty, it may excite among the lay members of the Papal Church, some salutary trains of thought, and induce them to reconsider, and seriously to ponder on that most unscriptural and hazardous system to which they, unhappily, have given their adhesion.

To notice, even in a cursory way, all the vulnerable points

of the *Roman Catholic Church*, would, in this place, be impracticable; a selection will therefore be made, on which to found a few comments, under the impression, that if two or three of its leading tenets are disproved, it will establish the shallow basis on which this assumed Infallible Church rests; a Church, when closely examined, that will be found to resemble a Lazar House, without a foundation, and built on the sand.

The writer proceeds to remark, that it is the passion for self-exaltation which inspires Romanists with the aim to crush *private judgment*;—to deny the power of *Laics* to determine aright on any question of Divinity, through its whole prescriptive or doctrinal code, without Clerical aid; that is without the infallible guidance—derivable from *Popish Priests*, denominating themselves, '*The Church*.' These lofty Ecclesiastics declare, that the Bible, apparently so plain, is, in reality, a sealed Book, inexplicable, and destitute of instruction to all but themselves, who are enabled by a semi-inspiration, to dive into its occult sense: so that, by this assumption, they arrogate a complete dominion over the faith and reason of men. The primitive believers read their Bibles; and that they understood what they read, and imbibed its spirit, was manifested by the persecutions they endured, rather than apostatize. How is it that the same Bible cannot be understood *now*, by sound understandings and honest hearts, without the intervention of Romish Priests? Protestants affirm it may; and circulate the Scriptures freely. Papists, on the contrary, resist this circulation, as injurious to some, and beneficial to none, save themselves. Yet one Apostle commends another for having 'known the Scriptures from his youth,' and declares, they were able to make him 'wise unto salvation.' On another occasion he says to his converts, 'Judge ye what I *say*,' and consequently, what I *write*. This is good evidence that the Scriptures were to be read by the Laity, and that they admitted of being well understood. But that which warmed the heart, and regulated the faith and

practice of believers *once*, it appears, has contracted obscurity with age, and now Romish Priests profess that they alone are competent to understand the Sacred Records. In virtue of this exclusive privilege, they have generously engaged to save their flocks the whole *trouble* of examining the Scriptures. They have promised to determine for them their true meaning, and, as a further act of grace, have undertaken to make known to their anxious friends, all which is important to be known in the *Bible*, and about that which is unimportant, neither the teachers, they think, nor the taught need concern themselves.

Almost incredible as it may appear, these enlightened Romanists, emboldened by the progressive conquests they have made over the ductile human mind, now regard all men as arrogant and contumacious, who dare to judge of the Scriptures for themselves. Their aim is to reign absolutely, and magisterially over all belief on sacred subjects; and against those who question this their inalienable right, the insulted Priests launch their fiercest denunciations: so that the Church, according to this doctrine, is alone competent to determine that which is true or false in construing the Bible. and, consequently, what the christian world *shall* or shall *not* believe.

The Apostles distinctly predicted the declension of religious professors, or the reign of *Antichrist*, as about to arise, even in the first age of the Christian Church; an anticipation abundantly confirmed by Ecclesiastical History.—Yet, uninterruptedly, from the earliest times, and under all opposition, there has always existed a *true Church of Christ*. Although persecuted by the *sons of Esau*, it still increased in numbers, and spiritual affections; and this prosperous, but unostentatious advancement in divine knowledge, continued till religion disastrously received *Imperial Protection*, when the *Papacy*, arose, not ‘with healing under its wing,’ but, rather, like the Apocalyptical ‘*Pale Horse*, and his name that sat on him was *Death*!’

The true disciples of Christ had long endured oppression from the 'Rulers of this world,' who were their open and declared foes; but now they experienced a dangerous hostility from false friends;—who became more implacable in their hatred than professed infidels, and more tyrannous in their exactions. Remonstrances were unavailing! Tears pleaded in vain! Oppressed, and desolated by a succession of *Romish Heresiarchs*, (men who substituted the shadow of religion for its substance) the genuine Disciples of the Saviour found their ranks thinned by persecution, and wasted by violent deaths; yet in this dark extremity, there was still preserved 'A handful of corn upon the top of the mountains.'—Increasingly assailed by power and Priestly domination, this once more; little flock,' at length formed the hard resolve, in order to worship God conformably with the Bible, to leave their homes; to brave all hardships, and withdraw from intolerant and pitiless spirits, to vallies and lonely forests, or, with the eagles, to dwell among almost inaccessible rocks, dreading, from bitter experience, *Popish Christians*, more than the *Wolves*, by whom they were surrounded. On the sufferers' brow might still be read, 'Unmindful of tribulation, Resigned; and cheered with the hope, and smiles of Heaven.'

Romish Priests, at this time, through their artifice, founded on a consummate knowledge of the worst parts of human nature, with the *Pope* at their head, (now denominated '*The Sovereign Pontiff*') formed an indissoluble confederacy to bind to abjectness the minds and consciences of men. In confirmation of this charge, with increased confidence the Priests affirmed;—that the most devout readers of the Sacred Oracles were involved in total night as to the true meaning of what they read, till His Holiness, and the Cardinals,—consecutively succeeding the Apostles,—(a line seen and traced in darkness!) revealed the solemn truth.—If the express Delegates of Heaven had not determined on the precise import, how was it possible for the unlettered *Laity* to comprehend, or attach any meaning, to such obscure words as the following.

* I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God which should come into the world,'—or, 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.' Or such profound words as—'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself.' Like the unexplored mines of earth, these, and a thousand other precepts, equally unintelligible, must have been eternally left in obscurity, but for the irradiations of Popish light!

The high claims and lofty assumptions of these Descendants of the Apostles, may be thus comprehensively expressed, in accordance with their own modest avowals.—'Trust in us, 'the safest of guides.' The greater the 'sacrifice of a *pecuniary* nature you make for our benefit, and the more implicit 'the confidence you repose on our word, the more acceptable 'it will prove to *God* and the *Virgin*. We will tell you what-ever is needful to believe,—all that we believe ourselves, 'reduced by us to a small compass. *The Church*, like the '*Saviour*, imperatively says, '*Follow me?*' the only infallible directory. Submit your faith unreservedly to us, and 'equally so your *Purse*, for the good of your souls! The '*Priests*' *Chancery* is the best depository for riches,—the 'trash of this world! Cast away your *Bibles*! It will only 'lead you astray! We *cannot* err! The Church is every 'thing! To you the *Testament* is a perplexing and dangerous 'book! How should the ignorant interpret its enigmatic 'meaning? Flee therefore, as from the pestilence, all at-tempts to dive into the depths of Scripture! To your crude 'mind, it may *seem to condemn* some of *our* practices, but the 'error lies in *your* clouded understanding! We are Infallible. 'The Catholic Church will never prosper till that heretic-making book is completely locked up from the *Laitie*!'

To illustrate the contempt with which the Romish Hierarchy regard the non-Clerical mind, they have endeavoured to force on it, as verity, one of the mightiest of human delusions. Strange as to some it may appear, they have confidently relied on possessing a power sufficiently potent to obtain

credence from their passive community, even, for *Transubstantiation* ! The whole body of Roman Ecclesiastics, from the Pope on his throne, to the cloistered monk, (whatever *their own* views may be) require, as the most confirmed of truths, from all their followers, unqualified faith in Transubstantiation ! Those who from inexperience express surprise, should remember, that no Catholic on this subject can entertain a doubt, *for* the doctrine has been confirmed by a succession of Popes and Councils. In this case, whatever carnal objections may be advanced, every enlightened Catholic knows they *must* be unfounded, *because* those who are inaccessible to error affirm it.—So that, sustained by the whole weight of *Roman logic*, it is to be received as an essential tenet, with the same cordial assent which belongs to a self-evident truth ; and that on the penalty of damnation, and the utter rejection of God ! This, to some, may appear harsh, but it is the dictum of an Infallible Church which declares, in one of its most pithy apothegms,—‘ There is no mistaken judgment *in* the Church, nor salvation *out* of it.’

It is a happy circumstance when Fallacy is driven into a corner ;—when its empire over the mind rests on a single thread, which, being snapped, the whole edifice, like a castle of cards, falls to the ground. This effect must follow ; for if an *Infallible Church* is proved to be *fallible*, its character, so vaunted of, dissolves into ‘ thin air.’ It is a singular fact ; that this one doctrine of Transubstantiation is more strenuously insisted on by the Catholic Church, than any tenet in the Papacy ; and which is here predicted to be the mill-stone which will *drown Romanism in the depths of the sea* !—Truth is formed of stern materials, and when pursuing her object, with a lofty independence, turns neither to the right, nor to the left, but, without hesitancy, pronounces her inexorable decree. This same truth is now about to seal the fate of *Transubstantiation*.—Its discomfiture will be the more signal, and acceptable, from the opposing, and demonstrative arguments being compressed into a small compass.—The Church,

it should be recollected, stakes her character on the truth of Transubstantiation, established as it is, she affirms, by arguments so unassailable, that, without its unhesitating admission, the Gates of Heaven are for ever closed.—The question now will be dispassionately considered.

Papists solemnly affirm, that when a Priest, attired in tawdry habiliments, white, black, and yellow, interchanged with chameleon rapidity, his incense rising, his candles flaring at noon-day, and his crucifix exalted; that, after certain ceremonies, performed by him, in right of a divine commission,—that commission depending on the imposition of hands, (so Priests declare) consecutively continued, like a chain, from the Apostles; no link wanting, or the whole would be vitiated. This mysterious efflux, also, (it is further affirmed) has preserved, unimpaired, its virtue, although its transmission has often passed through Popes, preeminent for all the vices of the most depraved humanity. So extraordinary a conjunction of circumstances might suggest objections to some fastidious minds, yet, they are all nugatory; so the Church affirms, for when the Priest, whatever his moral condition, has once performed his part, and blessed the elements, and repeated a certain prayer, at the instant of its termination, the transmutation, with lightning speed, is completed! The bread and the wine, after this preliminary process, have changed their nature, and have become—what? It is a reflection on man, as a rational being, to declare! Yes. After the Priest's few and plastic words, and ceremonies, that which, one moment before consisted of bread and wine, at the next (according to the infallible Church) has become—the true body and blood of Christ!—the very body which hung on the cross, and the very blood which there was shed for the redemption of man. To counteract any *mystical sense* which some of the weak-minded might entertain, the Catholic Church expressly disclaims any such sense, and declares, that the transformation is so perfect, that—‘the appearance only of the bread and wine remains.’

This instantaneous and miraculous change, so confidently affirmed, of one substance into that of another, is not an extravagant hypothesis, as strangers might suspect,—the sport of vagrant fancy, but the grave resolve of a succession of Popes, Councils, and Fathers, commencing with the Papal Establishment, and each succeeding generation surpassing its predecessor in maintaining the doctrine—of *the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist*. But if the violation offered to common sense, and the laws of nature, be deemed a startling objection, the argument which follows will still deepen the conviction.

When the Saviour said, ‘I am the good shepherd.’ ‘I am the vine.’ Romanists admit the language to have been figurative; as they do, when he declared, ‘I am the door.’ But when he said, with supreme tenderness, ‘This do in remembrance of me.’ ‘This is my body which is broken for you.’ ‘This is my blood which is shed for you:’—all figure is renounced, and that, for one plain reason, ‘the *Church, the Infallible Church* has so determined: a source of authority that cannot err.’ Before one reflection, however, this groundless assertion will vanish. At the time when Christ uttered these words, his body was *not* broken, nor his blood *shed*. According therefore to the usual and admitted laws of construction, the meaning of his words must have been *anticipative*. ‘This is (or resembles) my body which *will* be broken for you.’ This is (or resembles) my blood which *will* be shed for you.’ But this reasonable interpretation is fatal to the real presence of Christ’s body and blood. The Saviour was *then* before them, whole, and entire; so that the sense, at the moment when the words were uttered, *must* have been *emblematical*, yet the Catholic Church,—the concentrated wisdom of man,—that is, of Priests, disclaims the figurative sense, as absolute heresy, and the penalty of its acceptance,—damnation!

In every age, Popish Priests, in their aggregate capacity, have pronounced themselves, ‘*The Church*,’ requiring it to be

understood, that this title confers on them an authority, resembling inspiration,—a sort of celestial panoply, which screens from error. Under this impression, and being eminent for *pugnacity*, Romish Ecclesiastics direct their *fiery* assaults, with true clerical inveteracy against all who dare to oppose them on this fundamental point. Endued as they thus are, (in their own esteem) with a super-human power and authority, their language becomes consistently oracular; as their decisions are infallible; in which spirit they maintain *Transubstantiation*!—There is one extraordinary feature in this doctrine, as promulgated by the Romish Church. Catholics affirm, that after the blessing of the Priest has converted bread and wine, into Christ's flesh and blood, or the real presence, it is only such to the *believing* participant. The flesh and blood, by a miraculous power, is *re-converted* into ordinary bread and wine, to every *infidel*, who sacrilegiously becomes a partaker. So direct is truth; so tortuous is error! But the God of Truth has ordained certain tests, detective of falsehood, of which, one of more than overwhelming force will now be applied to *Transubstantiation*.

The question may be asked, and no evasive, or casuistic reply will be admitted. The plain question is asked—*When*, for the *first time*, was bread and wine converted into Christ's flesh and blood? We can trace the origin of the Sabbath, of Circumcision, of the Lord's Day, of the designation of Christians, &c.. but when was the *origin* of Transubstantiation?—that mighty incident, when simple bread and wine were transmuted into Christ's flesh and blood? It could not have occurred at the commencement of the Eucharist, for the cogent reasons before stated, and because no sane mind, nor the firmest advocate of Transubstantiation, can assert, without being exposed to ridicule, that the Apostles when joining, with the Saviour in the last supper, and receiving from him the bread and wine, believed it, *at that time*, to consist of his real flesh and blood; and yet Christ had blessed the elements. Are the blessings of Priests more effectual and

transforming than those of their Lord? But to prevent any misconstruction of his words, when Christ said, 'This is my body,' 'and this is my blood,' he immediately subjoined, 'Do this *in remembrance* of me. After this, could the Disciples possibly have understood their Lord, as speaking of his own *flesh and blood*, other than emblematically? Yet, according to the Romish Infallible Church, the emblematical sense, to all who rashly entertain it, involves mortal sin!

If no other argument were derivable from reason and Scripture, the words of St. Paul (1—11 Cor.) would be conclusive against the 'Real Presence.' At the Institution of the Eucharist, Christ, in giving the *cup* to his Disciples, plainly showed the nature of the Ordinance, by saying, 'This is the New Testament in my blood,' concerning which, no words can be more figurative. To confirm this construction, so adverse to the 'Real Presence,' the same Apostle adds, as the words of Christ,—'For as oft as ye drink this cup, ye do *show* the Lord's death till he come:' indicating as clearly as can be expressed by human language, the true emblematical sense of the words;—that is, that they were (as Protestants understood them)—an *emblem*; and designed to be a perpetual *remembrance*, or *memorial* of Christ's Death and Resurrection. But as a still more conclusive argument against the Papist interpretation, the Saviour, immediately after uttering the expressions, 'This is my blood,' subjoined, in order to dispel all misapprehension, words so clear, that charity alone can acquit the advocates for a literal sense, of absolute duplicity, Christ used these decisive words, (Matt. 26—29.) 'But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth (or again) *of the fruit of the vine*, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.'

The truth, and even permanence of the whole Papal system so essentially depends on *Transubstantiation*, that the Reader, (however superfluous) will tolerate another argument.

As a further corroborative proof that the words, 'This is my flesh,' and 'This is my blood,' were purely figurative,—

the emblems of *bread*, and *flesh*, and *blood*, had been used by Christ, in an illustrative sense, from the commencement of his Advent; as when he said, 'I am the living *bread* that came down from heaven.' 'The *bread* that I will give him is my *flesh*.' 'He that eateth of this *bread* shall live for ever.' 'Whoso eateth my *flesh*, and drinketh my *blood* hath eternal life.' 'He that eateth me, even he shall live by me.' &c., &c. Notwithstanding all this combined evidence that the words '*flesh*,' and '*blood*,' were adopted by Christ in a purely emblematical sense, yet Romanists will perversely take the *figure* for *fact*. In the *grossness* of their conception they resemble the *Pharisees* of old, who *also* understood the Saviour *literally*, and, in conformity with their low conceptions, thus replied to the symbolical words they had heard, '*How can this man give us his flesh to eat?*' The obtuseness of the *Pharisees* exceeded not that of the *Papists*. Christ, on the contrary advanced an accumulation of arguments, to show that under the emblems of *his flesh* and *his blood*, he referred to the manner of his death, when his body should be *broken*, and his blood *shed*, as the means of giving 'Life to the world.'

But still further to show the utter futility of the argument on which Romanists found Transubstantiation;—if the change, so stupendously great! did not manifest itself in the '*Large upper Room*,' was it disclosed to the Evangelists during the forty days preceding Christ's ascension?—A supposition so extravagant, that it has never been adduced. But a most appropriate conjuncture is now approaching for the establishment of this marvellous truth. The *first day* of that week which followed the withdrawal of Christ's bodily presence from earth has now arrived, called, '*The Lord's Day*,' when His disciples met, for the first time, to commemorate the death and resurrection of their Saviour. Seeing the vast transformation of converting bread and wine into flesh and blood, literally, had not yet occurred, if it was ever to take place, this season appeared to be the most favourable.

But did it so occur? Can a reasonable being advance the opinion, that the Apostles believed that the Eucharist,—the commemorating bread and wine, then received by them, was different in its nature from that of which they had partaken with their Lord? If, according to their apprehension, there really was a difference, can it be admitted that those holy men would have maintained a total silence respecting it, both at that time, and through all their Epistles?—that they, with all their rectitude of spirit, would have concealed a fact, so marvellous in itself, and, if true, of such vital importance to the christian world?

It has thus been shown that Transubstantiation never had a beginning, or recorded origin in the Bible, and which justifies the conclusion, that it was altogether *concocted by artful Priests!* This simple fact, showing that the doctrine never had a commencement,—(so strangely overlooked by the opponents of Transubstantiation) utterly overthrows the Papist's *monstrous doctrine*, and from which one consequence necessarily follows. It proves that *Roman Catholic Priests*, through a succession of ages, have *grossly deceived the world!* (And there may be *some* who believe that they deceived *themselves!*) by zealously inculcating a Tenet, which, when dispassionately examined, has not the *semblance* of an argument in its support. No impartial and reflective mind can fail to believe that, with other cankering defects, the subversion of this main-spring of the Papacy, will, ere long, carry with it the whole of Rome's falsely assumed *infallible*, but really *rotten, and Heresiarchal Church*.

For the want of better reasons, the perplexed advocates of Transubstantiation, often refer to its *antiquity*, as if falsehood were converted into truth by having been transmitted from remote generations. But do they plead antiquity for their departure from Scripture!—and regard *age* and *numbers*, as justifying pleas? The disciples of *Budda* and *Confucius* greatly exceed them in the advantages which age confers, and if numbers are to throw a shield over their obliquities, in this

distinction, they are greatly exceeded by the dark-minded followers of *Bramah*, *Seeb*, *Vishnu*, and *Juggernaut*. Independently of which, the antiquity they boast of, is not legitimate antiquity. Their arrow falls short of the mark at which they aim. It extends not down to the *Bible*, the source of all sacred, and admissible authority. On the contrary, this fallacious doctrine is ascribable alone to the *dark ages*, when corruptions of every kind had nearly obliterated all of Christianity but its *name*. The following must be deemed the correct explanation of this *prodigious* Tenet!—Transubstantiation augmented the *power of the Priests*! By attaching a literal interpretation to words, which, to a *certainty*, were meant to be figurative, the *Roman Hierarchy* became, apparently, invested with the faculty of *working miracles*, which, to an ignorant people, at once gave their Order a superlative elevation. So abject was the state of knowledge when this doctrine was first promulgated, that the community at large were prepared to adopt, and did receive the most flagrant absurdities. Whatever the Priest affirmed, admitted of no debate, and, from the reverence in which he was held, and his infallible character, the human mind, at that time was held by him in complete subjection.

Effects naturally follow causes. Romish Priests now arose, such as had been foretold by the *Evangelist*, ‘speaking perverse things;’ ‘turned unto fables;’ ‘speaking great swelling words;—having men’s persons in admiration, because of *advantage* ;’ ravenous for wealth and secular power, calling themselves ‘*The Church*.’ In this abject state of society, Transubstantiation commenced its career. The Priests were worthy of the people, and the people of the Priests. Imposing on the credulous spirit of the age, and conceiving their authority incontrovertibly established, the *crafty Clerics* now resolved on using, to some effectual purpose, the ascendancy they had acquired. They determined that when they, in their almost unearthly rank and power, blessed the bread and wine, and thereby, as they declared, conferred on

them a new nature, even the flesh and blood of Christ ! all in their community *should* be compelled, implicitly, to believe in this wonderful transmutation ; and that all *reprobates*, that is, all who questioned what the *Priest* so confidently affirmed, should, of the Church, which they had dared to slight and insult, endure due recompense, by being doomed to the *infernal regions* ! But as this was punishment *deferred*, the tender-hearted Priests (amongst other evidences of displeasure)—to give delinquents a foretaste of the fate that awaited them, poured on their heads the weight of present *excommunication*, with all its terrific consequences ! In after years, a vast accession was made to the power of testifying Clerical ire, by the advantages the *Inquisition* afforded, when, through the merciful Loyola's *heretic-crushing Institution*, the opposers of Ecclesiastical law were taught their rashness by being made to endure, slow-wasting starvation ; torture, or the *burning pile* !—The Priest's compassionate expedients for correcting mental error, as well as for teaching obedience to the *Papal Chair*, and establishing the '*true faith* !'—All this as they professed,—' For the love of *God*, and *the Church* !'—or, rather, to give depth to human depravity, and to add gems to the crown of martyrdom !

It will be remembered, with a shrinking of the spirit, what the great *Council of Trent* has decreed, in reference to this doctrine of *Transubstantiation*, when it solemnly investigated, (after a deliberation of eighteen years) and professed irrevocably to decide on all the disputable questions that had at any time agitated the Papal Church. This grand assemblage of Ecclesiastics, in solemn convocation, thus poured forth its imperious mandate.—' If any man shall say, in the blessed '*Sacrament—the Eucharist, the substance of the bread and wine remains along with the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and shall deny the wonderful and singular conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the body, and the whole substance of the wine into the blood,—the appearance of the bread and wine only remaining, which con-*

'version the Catholic Church calls *Transubstantiation*,—let 'him be *Anathema* !'

Language so plain admits of no misconstruction, yet certain half-hearted Protestants adopt the subterfuge of a *mystic* meaning;—as though the words were of doubtful import, or that there could be any medium between truth and falsehood. The plain interpretation is, their hearts lean toward *Rome*, but the scale is counterbalanced by *Protestant Emoluments* !—so that their aim appears to be, to approach as near as possible to the precipice, without falling over. But the motto of their Popish friends is, '*All, or none* !' They regard semi-converted Protestants, in holding this mystical *Transubstantiation*, as direct *Heretics*, and consign them all over to perdition, whether they be Archbishops, Bishops, or their inferior Clergy; and which fatal penalty equally extends to the whole of their unbelieving flocks !—Who does not blush for man !

From the preceding, it is distinctly shown that *Transubstantiation* is a baseless theory, which, instead of being *sustained* by Scriptural authority, is opposed by it in the clearest way. From all this, one conclusion necessarily follows. It scatters to the winds the Catholic's pompous *Mass*, which is as idle a ceremony as ever entered into Pagan imagination. And yet Priests have made this showy spectacle the very foundation of the Catholic Church. Take away the *Mass* from Romanism, and what has it left? It becomes the headless trunk of Goliath ! Or, to change the figure, deprived of its *Mass*, the whole edifice of the Papacy crumbles into dust and rottenness !

It is one of the Catholic's artifices, to give *publicity* to every stray conversion to his Church, but on the numerous *defections*, he observes a wise and politic silence !—Now, we are told of the accession of a Bishop's daughter, (who ought to have known, and been taught better.) Now we hear of some gloomy gownsmen's adhesion, who sees nothing but dark clouds about the Sun ! At other times is trumpeted the

conversion of some young Barrister, who wants *Absolution*, but applies for it in the wrong quarter. Then we are told of some silly country girl's proselytism,— who is sure there must be a great deal of religion, of the right sort, where there is so much *nice music* !

Many persons are alarmed at these abandonments of Protestantism, but their fears are idle. The Crown only shines the brighter from the encumbering dust that may be blown from it. The Catholics' days are numbered ! Their whole system rests on a frail human base ; originally founded, as it was, on superstition, and nourished by ignorance ;—and as the mists retire before the rising sun, so, assuredly, the delusions of Popery will vanish as the light of Scripture extends, and the intellects of man acquire their rightful faculty of unravelling the perversities of error. The most sensitively apprehensive may repress their alarm. Within a brief period, and those who have swollen the ranks of Popery, will haply return to the Protestant Fold, as true penitents, with thousands in their train, all escaping from the fore-doomed *Babylon*, whose *utter destruction* advances on the swiftest wing of *Prophecy*.—Romanism received its mortal wound when the *Bible* began universally to be diffused, and if the crisis should, in the smallest degree, be accelerated by these humble efforts, it will administer consolation, living and dying,—not diminished, one atom, by all the contumely and scorn which may be poured forth by the lingering or expiring Gladiators.

In the benighted period, when Romish Priests affirmed what they would ; and the Laity, (good easy souls !) believed, and with a relish, all they heard, such distorted dreams might pass as freely as the current coin ; but if the fact were unknown, respect for the character of our species would deem it impossible for such torpor of the intellect to exist in the present enlightened day : but blindness has once more ' happened in part,' and the insinuating traductions of error have still, with many, the power of paralyzing the mind. The true, though recondite cause of this obtusity, evidently results

from the unbounded reliance placed on *man*, rather than *God*; on the 'cunning craftiness of those who lie in weight to deceive,' rather than on the 'Word of Life.' The conviction forcibly arises, that there were formerly, (not wholly extinct in the present day) hosts, who, from experiencing some difficulty in the management of their understanding, and desirous of being relieved from so onerous a burden, as well as from the *toil* of weighing evidence, and consulting *Scripture*, testified their readiness, to believe *any thing*; and therefore resigned themselves wholly over to their Priests. (Like the Jesuits to their General) imploring of them, with humiliating importunity, to think and decide for them, on all subjects, especially on those that concern their *eternal interests*! (If the world should again regress into this quiescent state, what a luxuriant harvest would once more be reaped by the Romish Church!)

Let it now be considered;—if a body of men, declaring themselves to be, '*The true Church*,' and who claim an exclusive right to direct, irrevocably, what the christian world is to admit, or reject; whose precepts, as they declare, are all infallible!—whose words are firm as the everlasting hills, even as the '*Eternal City*!'—whose laws, decisions, and institutions, bear the signet of perpetuity!—stable amid a changing world! if such a Church, when arrogating these unearthly claims, presents its credentials for obtaining human confidence, by advocating *Transubstantiation*! (the most flagrant, as well as the most credited, *of all the lying miracles of the Romish Church*!) it becomes a clear evidence that human authority is a broken reed, and that men can place reliance alone on the '*Scriptures of Truth*,' with the assistance which is derived from the legitimate laws of Philology. Such is its absurdity, that, *to* reason against Transubstantiation is almost degradation to a thinking mind. Who labours to prove that a half is less than the whole?

This is no moment for parley and hesitation. If there be '*A time for all things under the sun*,' this is the time to

speaking out decisively; when the enemy appears at the door; when the *Protestant Fortress*, is desperately assailed,—by *treacherous advocates within*, and by *deadly foes without*! Let those shrink from encountering *Antichrist*; from resisting *Romish Priests*,—(so sedulously injecting their poison into the thoughtless young, and into the ignorant old!)—Let those who are indifferent when the Ark of the Covenant is touched by unhallowed hands;—when the sanctuary of religion is invaded by hostile spirits;—when the Bible is hidden, or, in all its essential features, perverted, by traitors in the guise of friends!—Let these ignominiously retire, but others will advance. Men will arise, endued with the true elements of moral courage, and who prefer not ease and cowardly concession, to the intrepid vindication of Truth. These fearless opposers of treachery and error, to whom frowns are held light; and conscience is dear, will shrink not in the hour of conflict, from divesting of its false colours the *Papist's anti-Christian system*! If righteousness be worth contending for;—if the gross religious perversions of Romanists demand resistance;—if their substitution of human Creeds, for Divine Laws; of unauthorized and phantastic rites, for the faith and order of the Bible, with all their other innumerable innovations; if these be deemed of magnitude sufficient to sound alarm,—then should such complicated evils be resolutely withstood by a combination of all the friends of sacred verity, and the counteracting exertion be proportioned to the extent of the heresy, and the inveteracy of the disease.

Papists call themselves Christians, and *the only Christians*. This title signifies the obedient disciples of Christ; but do they obey him? Is their conformity to his governance shown by directly violating so many of his express commands?—by introducing into the pure and simple directory he gave, either verbally, or by the agency of his inspired Apostles, a hundred extraneous deformities, which subvert its hallowed character, and assimilate it to Heathenism itself? The Romanists' perversions and corruptions of Scripture are the accumulation

of ages; one bold innovator after another, adding to the accession, till it has arrived at its present awful state of departure from the Oracles of Truth.

It is appalling to reflect on the extreme degradation to which religion is reduced in Popish countries, and particularly among *Ecclesiastics*! The very semblance of Christianity is often abolished, and that by the highest Dignitaries of the Catholic Church. One confirmation will be derived from a recent traveller, of undisputed credit. As a preliminary to the extract it is necessary to be known, that *Salzburg* is one of the richest Sees in Germany; being the seat of an Archbishop, and possessing a goodly assemblage of stately, well-fed and well-paid Priests.

Salzburg, it appears in the early stage of the Reformation, abounded in proselytes to the light then beginning to dawn on Europe; but the clerical power preponderated, and from this City and Province alone, (beside corporal inflictions) thirty thousand converts to the reformed faith were inexorably banished! Romanists now trained all the inhabitants. The success of their efforts will be seen by the subsequent recital, showing the effect of expelling the *salt* from among a people. From a city of the first class, and of general prosperity, it is now equally distinguished for ignorance and superstition. As steadily as the shadow surrounds the *tower*, so *cruelty* invariably follows the rule of *Romish Priests*.—Thus the Traveller.—

‘At *Salzburg* we saw the *Torture Chamber*! where political offenders, and especially the *Protestants*, were raised by a rack to the roof, and then, with weights attached to their feet, suffered to fall through a trap-door, to a more terrible dungeon beneath, into the arms of an iron *figure*, which (moved by machinery) either crushed or killed them at once! * * * * * As we were passing the Cathedral last Sunday, we saw the people arranged in file at the door. In a few moments the Archbishop appeared, preceded by Priests, in gorgeous dresses, carrying Banners. As soon as he entered, the people fell on their knees to receive his blessing. He dipped his fingers in the *Holy Water* and sprinkled it around. As he walked in solemn state up the aisle, he stretched forth his hand from side to side, and dispensed his blessing. His clothing was entirely of scarlet, and two Priests bore his train. Four

'Bishops, and many Priests followed. He was welcomed by *drums* and *trumpets*. When he reached the centre of the Cathedral, he knelt on a crimson cushion, prepared for him, and crossed himself. He then proceeded to his Throne, where the operation of dressing and undressing took place, where he was decorated with abundance of cambric, and deep rich lace. His mitre was put on and taken off, I know not how many times. The Bishops were very beautifully attired. The same exchange of mitres took place with them. * * * The music and singing, with occasionally the chanting a few words from the Dignitaries, constituted all the *audible* service:—waving incense, bowing first to the altar, then to the Archbishop, and marching to three pictures, all the *visible* worship! The procession then returned as it entered.—*Oh, what awful mockery! Surely Heathenism is better worship! There was no worship of God. How can men lend their powers to such a system of deception and iniquity!*'*

The *Bible*, disseminated and understood, would have corrected all these enormities, but when the *Bible* finds its way, by accident, into such districts as the above, the Priests from a knowledge of its *evil* or *adverse* tendency to themselves, become alarmed, and with the same earnestness seek it out for seizure, which they would feel to arrest a midnight plunderer. From this systematic exclusion, the Bible has been found, with rare exceptions, to be an unknown book; and on the continuance of this exclusion, the Romish Priests well know, the permanence of their complicated impositions, depends.—The same traveller repeated to an *educated* Austrian, 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.' He immediately replied, 'Dear me, what beautiful sentiments! Whose words are those?—Byron's?'

The subject is too vitally important to admit of temporizing expressions, and sacred truth requires it to be affirmed, that *Romanism*, while it has become the hot-bed of infidelity, *dishonours the Christian name!* In some places the enormity of its doctrines and practices may be found in somewhat less revolting form, but in its least exceptionable aspect, it is fearfully adverse to the Bible, and must, ere long, fall like Dagon

* Rev. James Sherman's (of Surrey Chapel) Memoir of his excellent wife pp. 167. 197—1848.

before the Ark.—*The Scriptures and the Papacy cannot permanently exist together !*

Some, whose prejudices are too strongly entrenched to be subdued by reason, may question these predictions, and attempt to sustain the character of the Romish Church by appealing to the eminence of certain of its members. They may talk, with becoming pride, of their *Pascal*, and their *Fenelon*, as specimens of the Popish community (names so often advanced as to show the paucity of their number,) but these are exceptions only to a general rule. That men may have been found, in past ages, of exemplary worth and piety, connected with the Catholic Church, notwithstanding its *perversities*, and its *perversions*, is indisputable; and many such, doubtlessly, now exist, particularly among the *Laily*, but this only proves, to adopt the language of a wise and good man (*Andrew Fuller*,) that ‘Men may be better than their principles.’—As a general position,—the clearest and most mournful evidence exists, that the Papal System is decidedly opposed to *that* religion which is founded on the *Sacred Word*, and, therefore, that it is to be determinately opposed, in every authorised way.—The Writer does not recur to *extracts*, or his pages might be thronged with high confirmative opinions, but he cannot refrain from giving one citation from the eminent divine, ‘*Lightfoot*.’

‘The Church which is built more on traditions and doctrines of men, than on the Word of God, *is no true Church, nor religion*. But the Church of Rome *is* built more on traditions, and doctrines of men, than on the Word of God. —Ergo. * * That Priests can sing souls out of Purgatory; that the service of God should be in an unknown tongue; that the Priests can change the bread into God ! The whole Romish Religion hath not so much as one underpinning of Scripture warrant, but all is founded upon the *rotten trash of human inventions, and selfish ends*.’

After such departures from the primitive standard, no wonder can be excited that Romanists, with the Pope at their

head, should testify such united, unconquerable, and uncompromising repugnance to the circulation of the *Sacred Volume!*—even of that Book which they so hypocritically profess to reverence. If it *be* the standard of their Faith, why hide it? These professors of true religion, by expostulation, threats, even by the most inveterate *Papal Bulls*, transmitted to all parts of the world, attempt to suppress the Bible;—virtually, that *they* might teach rather than *God!* This is abundantly proved by the repeated *Pontifical Prescripts* issued against the English and American Bible Societies’—(the glory of both Lands!) What is to Papists that an Apostle enjoined on his Infant Churches, to read his Epistles, and to have them read. What is to Catholics, that Christ authoritatively enjoined on all who bore his name, to ‘Search the Scriptures.’ These *blind* leaders of the *blind*, notwithstanding their *malady*, can see sufficiently clear, well to know, that the perusal of the Sacred Volume, if not protested against, and especially if encouraged, would ‘spy out the nakedness of the land,’ and dissipate, irretrievably, the Romanists’ rust and corruption of ages.

With the strictest accuracy it may be affirmed that the system of Romanism, consists, to a superlative extent, of falsehoods, of superstitions, and idolatries; combined with unauthorized, and pitiable ceremonies, and observances; dazzling to the eye, but, in an equal degree, paralyzing to the heart. Is not such a Church, *Heresiarchal*? Numerous individuals, superficial, perhaps, on no subject but that of religion, on beholding the absurd mummeries practised in the Romish Service: the sottish folly, and mental degradation, to which Popery has reduced the human mind, and being indisposed to separate the chaff from the wheat, in many instances, have hastily concluded all to be a delusion, and endeavoured to console themselves with the barren comforts of Infidelity. In addition to its other disastrous effects, it is incontestable, that the Popish Church has made more *Sceptics*, amongst reflecting men, than has been effected by all the infidel writers

combined, from the days of *Porphyry* and *Celsus*, down to the present moment! With such consequences pleading against it; let the impartial mind determine whether Romanism has proved itself to have been a blessing, or a curse to the world, and especially to the cause of genuine christianity.

Yet constitutionally vicious as this degenerate and intolerant Romish Church is, (founded in *Heresy*; yet, most anomalously! persecuting, from age to age, *for* Heresy, those who are *not* Heretics!) regret may be expressed, at the habit which some adopt of calling the Catholic and Protestant, two different religions. In a limited sense, they are one religion, that is, the *Christian*. This confession must be received with a wide latitude of interpretation, implying that the former is not *Hindooism* nor *Mahommedanism*, &c., but, at least, nominal Christianity. Yet, though of one genus, they diverge off into distinct species; so that the two branches of religion exhibit Christianity in different states of purity; and in no other sense are they *one*, than, as a decayed mansion, after it has been repaired, is still the same house. This Protestant Edifice is substantially sound, with an immoveable foundation, being built, not on error;—on fallible, and conflicting *Fathers*; not on *Tradition*, and idle *rites* and *ceremonies*, but ‘on the Apostles and Prophets, *Jesus Christ* himself being the chief corner stone.’ But the Catholic Fabric is now become so disfigured and dilapidated, that those who compare it with the primary model would not suspect it to be derived from the same original. In this extremity, and in order to acquire its pristine excellence, it must be wholly *reconstructed*, with a close adherence to its *Archetype*; in which case it would become identified with *Protestantism*!

Let the enlightened mind endeavour to repress its painful emotions, whilst it revolves on the following surreptitious and enormous additions, made by *Roman Catholics* to the clearly-defined religion of the *Bible*. Let him reflect, if he can, without a shrinking of the spirit, on the following false and debasing appendages to Christianity, which, at this time, are

sanctioned by, and constitute such integral parts of the Papal Church.

On the 'Romanist's abstinence from meats, as a religious duty!—On their Relics!—On their Mortifications, and Flagellations!—On their Purgatory!—On their Consecrated Wafers!—On their Celibacy!—On their Holy Water!—On their revolting Auricular Confession!—On their Monastic Orders!—On their bare-faced Miracles!—On their Superstitious reverence for Stone-Altars, and the East!—On their endless bowings and genuflections!—On their praying to, and relying on, the Tutelary Protection of Saints and Angels!—On their Deifying, trusting in, and praying to, the Virgin Mary!—On their Prayers for the Dead!—On their Taking the Veil!—On their Services, as it is called, for the Repose of Souls!—(where the cry still is, Money! Money!)—On their Idolatrous Worship of Images!—On their Seven Sacraments!—On their adoration of the Wafer Host!—On their gorgeous Pageants!—On their Corporal Penances!—On their Lying Legends!—On their High and Low Mass!—with all their pompous vests and ceremonies!—On their Ascetic Exclusions!—On their manner of administering the Eucharist; although Christ said to his disciples, in giving them the Cup, *'Drink ye all of it!'* yet the Priests give the *Wafer* to their Communicants, and reserve the *Cup* for *themselves*!—On their accredited Mendicant Abjectness!—On their Intolerance, Proscriptions, and inhuman Cruelties toward all who question an atom of their artificial Creed!—On their imposition of Pater Nosters, and Ave Marias, as procuring pardon, or expiation for sin!—On the virtues of Extreme Unction!—On their Prayers in an unknown tongue!—On their presumptuous Absolutions, and diabolical Indulgences!—On their Canonizations!—On their remission (for money!) of Souls from Purgatory!—(The Dead, being impatient of the boon, which is only to be obtained by artful Priests; the earnestness and consequent effectuality of whose Prayers is nicely regulated by the weight of the purse received!)—

Where shall the list of Popish corruptions end?—If all this disruption from Biblical authority does not constitute *Heresy*, there is no meaning in words, and reasoning is as uncertain as the stability of the winds!

After reflecting on these complicated and appalling inroads on the religion of Christ, let the impartial spirit answer—Is not this a mockery of sacred things?—Is it not substituting human fancies for the laws of the Most High?—Is it not, in the truest sense, ‘teaching for doctrine the commandments of men;’ and ‘making the Word of God of none effect, through their traditions?’ Can any enlightened mind refrain from exclaiming, ‘What marvellous examples are these, of daring assumption on the part of mortals!’—Or withhold his astonishment, that such inroads on Religion should occur in any region where the Scriptures are to be found!

Of all the various and flagrant encroachments on the Bible, here enumerated, scarcely one of them is more pernicious and fatal in its effects, than *Auricular Confession*, with its attendant enormity,—*Absolution*. These Confessions are equally *contaminating* to the recipient, and the deluded individual who confesses. To enforce this revolting practice, the Catholic *Douay Testament* artfully renders James v. 16, ‘Confess your sins—to the Priest!’—(What a promptitude there is in Papists to catch at the *least shadow* of authority in the Scriptures for their doctrines and practices, whilst they so often reject, with contempt, the most *direct precepts*, and disregard the most *imperative injunctions*! Will the world always be deceived by these inconsistencies?)

Some conscientious Christians abstain from reading certain criminal trials, and Police reports, from the mournful exhibitions they too often present of human depravity; the details of which, (often wantonly, and to an excess introduced) however opposed to their wishes, adhere sometimes to the memory with painful pertinacity. In such cases every man must be a law to himself. But if the mere occasional

reading of these delinquencies prove repugnant to the moral sense, what an influx of enormity must deluge the mind of every *Romish Priest*, into whose ear has been poured the concentrated abominations of a district!—and these disgusting images, in every variety of form, *perpetually recurring*, whilst the whole is necessarily fixed in his memory, where the compost ferments, and becomes a pestiferous confluence of all that is abhorrent! Their recollective faculties are thereby converted—absolutely—into receptacles of filth, into mental cess-pools, sinks of iniquity!—and all this positive evil endured and perpetuated by the Priests' *impious Absolution*!—the enormity being often augmented by the scrutinizing, if not libidinous, *questions* asked by the Priest, hardening one party, if there could be accession, and deadening all that still remained of delicacy in the feelings of the other!

It is this circumstance which generally gives so peculiar and subtle a *leer* to the countenances of Popish Priests,—(noticed by all who have travelled in Catholic countries). From the experience acquired in the *Confessional*, Priests become acquainted, not with the ennobling qualities of human nature, but, exclusively, with those which are the most revolting, when the consciousness of these secret deposits imparts a character of reserve and deep significance to their imperturbable faces, from which all indifferent persons instinctively recoil. Yet, almost incredible as it will appear, these Priests, whose imaginations must be as impure as familiarity with vice and vileness can make them, awfully undertake to exempt the sinner, (who has not secured himself by an '*Indulgence*!') from all guilt, although that guilt should wear the blackest dye! on the mere condition of repeating, as fast, and as heedlessly as he chooses, (more or less) a set form of words, like the cogs of a mill, over and over, called *Prayers*! From its monstrous absurdity, strangers might doubt the reality of so senseless a procedure, but it really exists, and Priests affirm that this Confession and

Absolution becomes a complete panacea against all future punishment! Waiving other objections, does not so facile an exemption from future penalty *encourage* the culprit to persist in his iniquities, consoled by knowing the easy terms on which he can obtain the *Priest's Pardon*?

To use the mildest language, Beelzebub never injected into the human heart, a more debasing and destructive delusion, than this Popish *Confession* and *Absolution*. Its violation of sense is only surpassed by its impiety. Can a rational being, who has ever reflected for a moment, or read one page of the Bible, be so obtuse in his perceptions, as to believe that a vain, and, too often, a wicked mortal, called a Priest, can exercise the *incommunicable* attribute of *Deity*, and absolve, or, as it is understood, forgive sins? To the Apostles, as an *especial gift*, Christ conferred the power (when moved by the Holy Spirit) to work miracles, and to forgive, or remit, or absolve from sin, but this was an *individual* communication. Is it to be inferred that the same faculty was extended to uninspired ecclesiastics, especially to all in the community of Rome? Priests, to exalt their order, affirm, '*it was,*' even to every Priest, good or bad, to the end of time!—*and there are those who believe them!*—Let these confident Priests work also miracles! If the second ability was conferred, why was the first withheld? They ought, and can, do one quite as easily as the other. So flagrant is the imposition thus practised by *artifice* on *credulity*, that none but unscrupulous Priests, interested in perpetuating the cheat, could unblushingly advance the falsehood. Yet crowds follow in the Priests' train, who from the inert, or feeble condition of their understanding, are strangers to all consequential reasoning and analysis; and, from this quiescent state of mind, they experience no difficulty in admitting the whole which their ghostly instructors choose to inculcate.

It is difficult to conceive of a more pitiable, or abject moral state, and, at the same time of a condition more hopeless, than *that* which a man or woman presents, who, under a

sense of guilt hurries off to a Priest for *Confession*!—when, having minutely stated their disgusting tale, without the least adverture to an offended *Maker*, or the *Great Propitiator*, he, or she, returns from *Absolution*, with a light heart, rattling the consolant *beads*, and after gabbling a few prayers to the *Virgin* or some *Saint*, loses all sense of responsibility. In this state of delusion, the miserable victim of a false guide, feels his conscience relieved, and, without any higher preparation, is cheered with the assurance of heaven! This is worse than Heathenism. From its abandonment to folly, it indicates, even, a renunciation of reason; a preference of darkness to light. The Heathens know no better, and if on this subject the Catholic *Laitie* are equally ignorant, it is, that *Priests* have withheld from their flock the *Word of Life*, which, alone, would effectually have corrected the error: but this directory, their instructors themselves heedlessly neglect or contumeliously despise.

As a further disastrous consequence of *Confession*—so peremptorily exacted by Priests from all their passive flock—what servile slaves do those instantly become who enter on the life-long practice of *Auricular Confession*? They are bound hand and foot. They have committed themselves, and made a Priest the depository of secrets which should, penitently, have been confessed only to God. A glance from the Priest, (especially one of accusation) to whom so much has been confided, thrills through every fibre of their heart, and demands a continuance of *that* which it would be perilous to withhold. Every spirit, thus placing itself in voluntary bondage, may know, assuredly, that all the disclosures it has improvidently made to the peccable, the grave, and *sly Confessor*, if not generally, or partially revealed to *confidants*, circulates from *Priest to Priest*, as freely as water percolates through the earth. Priests themselves acknowledge that the *Confessional* is less attended now than ever. This is a hopeful sign, and becomes a cheering indication that men and women are returning to their right mind; and which is the more

to be rejoiced at, as it discovers a tendency to despise the fetters, by which they have been so long, and so ignominiously bound.

Truth sometimes is deduced from trifling circumstances. However imperiously Priests may require Confession from others, and however zealously they may expatiate on the virtues of *Absolution*, they themselves are shrewd enough to plead exemption from its obligation, on account of their *sacerdotal character*, which, of course, precludes in them all necessity for *Confession*; they belong to the *purser class*! But if, from the not quite extinct impulse of conscience, one Priest in ten thousand should apply to another Priest for Absolution, at so strange a phenomenon, (like the *Augers* of old, after exchanging *smiles*) the award for a complete exoneration, would be, it is not hard to predict, a dusty string of beads put into his hand, with a recital of the shortest, and least spiritual prayer in the Breviary!

A casual remark must here be made on one other of the Romish enormities;—(to comment on all that demand notice would be endless!) that of inducing, or inveigling young and thoughtless females (as it is called) to ‘Take the Veil!’ A melancholy spectacle! and one of the most revolting features of a revolting system! The unhappy female is prevailed on, from morbid notions of piety, thus to *bury herself alive*! This is so hostile to the wholesome, and innate impulses of humanity, that, nothing but artfulness, first exciting enthusiasm, and then directing it, could possibly triumph over the strong bias of nature. In Germany, at the time of the Reformation, (so clearly shown by *Luther*; and in England, according to the Report of the Commissioners, in our Henry the Eighth’s reign) *Monasteries* and *Nunneries*, were flagitious to a proverb!—to which the *vile* practice of Confession necessarily contributed. The same causes in all ages produce the same effects; but the *present* object is to shew the extreme cruelty of encouraging deluded females, in the prime of life, to retire from the world in

which the Almighty had placed them, certainly not to act a sluggish and cowardly part ;—to extinguish their capacities for usefulness ;—to waste their lives in a dream, and hide their talents in a napkin, but, on the contrary, (in conformity with Christ's injunction) 'to let their light shine!'—and become manifest, like a city set on a hill :—to fulfil the purposes of their creation, and, in the exercise of Christian qualities, to become blessings to all around. The very principle on which *Nunneries* are established is pure selfishness. An absorption of all interests in one—an exclusive solicitude for the *individual*, and an indifference to the *species*!

Where has Christ, or his Apostles, enjoined this ascetic exclusion ?—this abandonment of all the social duties of life,—where mediums for doing good are so abounding, in order to retire into a premature *Mausoleum* ? Taking advantage of an inexperienced mind, and a heated imagination, these mercenary Priests, though not insensible to small advantages, yet ever look vigilantly around them, for the larger class of prizes ;—to *entrap*, if possible, some thoughtless young creature, possessed of *Property* ! Such proselytes are worth an effort to obtain !—When was it ever known that these insinuating Ecclesiastics—disinterestedly, or rather *justly*, required their fair converts—(before entering their *marble receptacle*) to transfer their *wealth* to their heirs ?—on the contrary, their injunction invariably is,—' My dear child, for 'the good of your soul, make all over to *the Church*. You 'have treasure enough elsewhere. *We* know best how to dispose of the husks of this world !'—Such men defile the ground on which they tread ! Nor does a charge much less severe apply to the relatives or friends of the *Priestly victim* who may have been accessaries to this sacrifice of youth and life to a gloomy superstition. If ever their minds should acquire a healthier tone, they will have furnished to themselves a theme for remorse, to their final moments.

The Monks of La Trappe, (the most severe, and the least

rational of all the irrational Monastic Orders) appear to have read the words,—‘Keep thy tongue from speaking *guile*,’ and to have interpreted them into, ‘Keep thy tongue from speaking *any thing*.’ (Perhaps on the conviction that if they *did* speak it must be with *guile*!) Under this delusion, and to climb up some other way to the heavenly fold than that authorized by the Bible, they maintain *total silence*;—relinquishing *speech* as a superfluous appendage of life. The Historian of the Trappists,* states, that at the entrance of a Member, it is the rule of the Order to conceal his real name, which is known only to the Superior, who records it in the Register, when the new inmate receives a fictitious name, as ‘Father John.’ ‘Father William,’ &c., (by which he is always addressed, *in writing*!)—One of the Members (from a call, as he thought, of duty!) had left his young family to join these Trappists, and had been in the society twenty years. Latterly he had been used to work in the garden, and attend the chapel, by the side of young man, of a look and demeanour remarkably interesting, recently introduced, but, according to the rules of the Society, without speaking. The young man declined in health, and speedily died of consumption, when his name was duly recorded on his *tombstone*. The Member referred to had the curiosity to go and look at the stone, when he discovered that this amiable and interesting young man, with whom he had never exchanged one word, was *his own son*!—When will the good sense of mankind drive these drones and cumberers from the earth?

But to return from particular to more general remarks. When recapitulating the long list of Roman Catholic infringements on Scripture, may it not be said, ‘If this be Christianity what can be denied that name? To testify against such unhallowed practices and principles is the imperative obligation of all who desire the extension of pure religion, or feel an interest in the welfare of man. Theological wanderings, confined to form, more than spirit, are to be deplored,

* Mrs. Schimmelpenninck.

but flagrant religious errors, like those enumerated, which have no sacred authority ; or otherwise violate the express letter of inspiration, assume a darker character ; rising still in aggravation when associated with an *intolerance* that breathes deadly hostility to all who admit not the innovators' doctrines and delusions. The feeling which before was limited to rebuke, now rises into indignation, bordering on contempt ; especially, when the irrefragable arguments adduced by Protestants, founded on the clearest Scriptures, are deemed of no avail, or despised ; and a preference is given to the authority of contentious *Fathers*, and the fraudulent voice of *Tradition*. It is this assumption of infallibility,—this rigid *exclusiveness* which becomes in Romanists the germ of their *sanguinary persecutions*. There is no hazard in predicting, that *Romish Priests* require only *adequate power*, to commence once more their *fiery persecutions*. Gladly would they institute, here, on British soil, their idolized *Inquisition* ; but, if that choice expedient for enforcing *Popish truth* were resisted by general execration, they would, as an ulterior effort, and the *next best* substitute, endeavour to establish a *Clerical Tribunal*, or another 'High Commission Court,' reiterating, with augmented fury, the barbarities once perpetrated in this suffering country, and the record of which presents so dark a page in English history.

As an evidence that the preceding charges on Romanism are not unsubstantial,—of all the surreptitious perversions of the Sacred Directory, before enumerated, not the least support is given to any one of them, from the first line in Genesis to the last verse of Revelations. What, therefore, are these profane additions to our Holy Faith, but an injury to man, and an insult to the Almighty ! It is nothing less than an impious attempt to improve, by human adjuncts, the religion given to us of God ! In such an extremity, every energy possessed by living man should be called into vigorous exercise to expose the Papist's tissue of falsehoods, and to resist men, who are, in the strictest sense, the most

formidable of existing impediments to the spread of pure Christianity. These deplorable impositions on the world are clearly resolvable—into consummate *subtlety*: operating on the weakness and unbounded *credulousness of man*. But the Bible not only withholds its sanction from these products of human contrivance, but specifically, or, by an equivalent implication, 'condemns the whole; consequently, these injurious intruders into the Christian's sacred enclosure, should be swept away, not by violence, (the Papists' grand expedient) but by the power of moral suasion, and through the awakening up of reflecting minds, after the sleep of ages.

The artificial incumbrances and machinery of religion, here commented upon, furnish an instance of a true *super-erogation*, the offspring of Pagan, if not of *darker origin*; yet these flagrant innovations are, in reality, the main-springs, the staple commodities, the grand component parts of the Romish Church!—the Priests' stock in trade, by which, with surpassing dexterity, they make merchandize of men, and through perseverance, obtain a knowledge of their craft, by the same laborious preparation which noviciates require when attempting to master some intricate mechanical art.

From the premises here advanced, it becomes the fairest of inferences, that the whole of Romanism is antagonistic to the spirit of Christ and his religion. Even the few favourable qualities which some prejudiced minds may deem it to possess, when closely inspected, will be found in opposition to all which is substantially beneficial and true. But even if occasionally, some incidental modicum of utility, should pertain to the Papal System, (as poisons in some of their modifications may be convertible into benefits) the casual good would be but a poor equivalent for so much positive evil.

Nor should it be forgotten, that the *Ancient Heresies* which in the earlier ages so convulsed the christian world, consisted not of *unmixed error*, but of error combined in different proportions with truth; so that *some* residuary good, (should

it be proved to exist) offers no justifying plea for Catholic *Corruptions* and *Heresies*. To this, one important reflection may be added. Some Heresies, though contrary to Scripture, and displeasing to God, are not hostile to humanity. They are united with respect for the social interests of man. *These* Heretics do not extinguish all sympathy toward those who differ from them in sentiment; and, consequently, so far as the relations of life are concerned, they are comparatively innoxious. They injure none but themselves, and those over whom they exercise an influence. But Catholic *Heretical Priests*, when endued with *power*, and thoroughly charged with their Creed, display absolute *ferocity*! Breaking through the moderations of reason, and the restraints of Christ,—on all who reject, or doubt their Faith, they approach, bristled with spears, and scatter around them arrows and death! *Other Heretics* may retain something of the milk of human kindness, but the devoted and remorseless *Romish Priest* derides the weakness of *pity*. The Church which he upholds, like his own spirit, is bitter, bloody, and intolerant! and her Clerical Expositors, through their excesses and violent infringements of Scripture, forcibly recall the words of *Him*, whose Gospel they have so flagrantly perverted. ‘There are first which shall be last, and there are last which shall be first.’

Such inroads on Christianity, as those before specified, are pronounced to be, in the figurative language of Scripture,—‘Clouds without water!’ ‘Wandering fires!’ ‘Trees whose fruit withereth!’ ‘Raging waves of the sea!’ It may be asked of these ‘will-worshippers,’ advocating such unauthorized forms and tenets, ‘Who hath required this at your hand?’—certainly not the Bible,—not Christ! not his Apostles! Romanists, as one additional mark of their *Heresiarchal* spirit,—their prodigious folly, and inveterate impiety! have divided, if not subordinated *Christ’s* authority to that of his honoured, but still *earthly mother*. With a marvellous want of reflection, amounting even to blasphemy, they proclaim her, ‘*Queen of Heaven!*’ and to whom, in the chief

degree, they address their supplications and prayers!—Is not such a Church Heretical?

As an instance of the awful profanity with which Roman Catholics speak of, and designate the *Virgin Mary*, the following words of *Bonald* (the present *Archbishop of Lyons*), though well known, cannot be too extensively read;—addressed to his admiring auditory!—‘When the christian religion was born on Mount Calvary, of the blood of Jesus Christ, she appeared in the world with a countenance, austere as her language, and daughter of the Man of Sorrows,—who had received in heritage only a crown of thorns; her hands bore no sceptre but the Cross. But this garb would have frightened the human heart too much if the Saviour had not given to religion, from the cradle, a companion, whose gentleness should temper her severity; whose charms should make men forget the rigour of her law, and support the weight of her yoke. This faithful companion was, my brethren,—the *Virgin Mary*!’

Perhaps, more despicable reasoning; more confusion of imagery; more open profanation, than appears concentrated in this one short sentence, is no where to be found. It is an effort to believe that such *baby eloquence*;—such revolting nonsense, could have been uttered without exciting disgust to an assemblage of idiots!—But, that it should have been addressed, with approbation, to professed Christians, men, apparently, in the possession of rationality, conclusively proves, that when the *Bible* is withheld, (a truth so well known to Papists) the ductile multitude, like the pliant osier, may be conformed, by art, to any shape or purpose, while, as an evidence of their degradation, they are too abased, to know, or to suspect, that their faculties *are* cramped, and subjugated by artifice and superstition. Yet, this is a sample of the Idolatrous Worship, which pervades, as a gangrene, the whole Romish Church! Such a Church must fall!—*‘Hasten it, O, Lord in thy time!’*

Even in this year (1849) the *present Pope*, the famous

Pius IX, in his exile from Rome, has issued an Encyclical Letter, which contains the following sentiments, nauseous as they must appear to every Protestant, and reflecting mind. 'For you know perfectly well, venerable brethren! that the *'foundation of our confidence* is,—in the most *Holy Virgin!* 'since it is in *her* that God has placed the plenitude of *all 'good*, in such sort, that if there be *any* hope, if there be *any* 'spiritual health, we know that it is from *her* that we receive 'it, because such is the will of Him, who hath willed that we 'should have all by the instrumentality of Mary!'

Here is a notable 'Head of the christian world!—a man who has never read the *Bible!*—whose irreligious sentiments might be corrected by half the charity children of Britain. 'His Holiness the Pope,' appears to know no more of the Sacred Word than the worshippers of the Grand Lama, or the couch on which he lolls! This,—he, with some others, may question, but the man who declares —'It is midnight,' at noon-day, we *know* to be blind, whatever he may affirm to the contrary; nor is it less certain, that the 'Representative of God upon earth,' when he affirms, 'We owe all to the instrumentality of Mary,' is ignorant of the first rudiments of religion. His attention must have been exclusively directed to *Fabulosity and lying legends!*—'*Mary,*' 'the Foundation of our Confidence!'—This from the Grand Director and Depository of Christian truth in the nineteenth century! The Almighty enlighten his dark mind!—It now ceases to excite wonder that '*His Holiness*' should possess in himself so little of the *Holy* as to denounce the circulation of *that Book*, which instructs in the true *'foundation of our confidence,'* and which is able, with God's blessing, to make every genuine Protestant 'wise unto salvation.' A problem in Euclid is not more certain, than, that such a man, and such a system, is, 'The true *Beast!*'—'*The Man of Sin!*' '*The Antichrist!*' of the Bible!

Let the devout and thoughtful Christian lay his hand on his heart, and answer to God and his conscience, whether he believes—that this violation of every thing accordant with the

New Testament can be acceptable to the Almighty, or conduce to promote true Religion on the Earth.—Let him determine whether *Catholicism*, with all its accumulated corruptions, has a tendency to augment the number of real Christians, by detaching their best affections from external objects and observances, and fixing their hearts on the ‘treasure in the Heavens;’—on the commands of Christ, and his Apostles.—Subject to this criterion, the Roman Fables, and all the Catholic’s inroads on Christianity will appear in their native deformity.

In Catholic countries, the general desecration of the Christian Sabbath is a decisive evidence of the irreligious state of the public mind,—after the many centuries of Priestly instruction! In Protestant nations, the Lord’s Day is slighted by too many, but a large proportion of the inhabitants hail this cessation from earthly pursuits, whilst the Institutions of the country honour the day, and the ministers of religion, universally, urge on their willing hearers a reverence for the season, consecrated to that sober and solemn reflection which becomes creatures born for eternity.—Continental Catholics, on the contrary, for the most part, attach neither respect nor importance to the Sabbath, except as a day of riotous pleasure. A few of the more devout pass a wearisome hour in listening to prayers *in an unknown tongue*; cross themselves with ‘*Holy Water*,’ and then (released from bondage) with elastic and satisfied spirits plunge into the dissipation of life.* This is such as might reasonably be expected from the inculcations of so Heretical a Church; where Priests too much dissipate their energies in enforcing ceremonious observances; which, fill the imagination, while they leave the heart untouched, and the conscience unawakened.

After every charitable consideration, it is impossible not to believe, that the *Robe*, which came spotless from the hands of

* The Writer’s attention was more particularly directed to this subject, from passing a Sunday at *Brussels*, when, at Tea-time, the Landlady entered to dispose of Tickets for the *Play*, which was to begin in a quarter of an hour!

the Apostle, has now contracted, through the influence of the Romish Church; from neglect of the Bible; and the perversions of *Priestcraft*; so much sordid defilement, and has received so many discordant '*patches*,' that (like Swift's Peter's Coat,) most of its original texture has been lost, overspread, or become obliterated.—This transformation has proceeded to such an extent, that if the Apostles were to revisit the abodes of men, amazement would be excited, that those who professed affinity with *them*, should so flagrantly have resisted *their* words, and by misconstruing their precepts, have so dishonoured the Christianity they profess to uphold. Could the Apostles doubt for a moment their departures from the only true standard, when they beheld their professed descendants so effectually confounding themselves with the world. When they beheld the humbler class of Priests, ardently pursuing vain, and phantastic forms, whilst the higher Ecclesiastics, up to the crowning stone of the Arch, revelled in, and displayed all that is voluptuous!—infatuated with their imperial Pomp!—their Riches!—their Palaces!—their Pageantries!—their lofty Thrones!—their Profane Titles!—their luxurious Banquets!—their Gorgeous Equipages!—their Tyrian Robes!—and Triple Crowns! The Apostles, in a state of wonderment, would scarcely recognize one vestige of that sublimely simple and Divine Vesture which they had left as their most precious bequest to mankind!

The Protestant Church has arisen, in a purified state, out of a chaos of Roman absurdities, and impieties. A love of Truth and Righteousness compelled her to leave the dwelling of her corrupt Progenitor, who had completely wandered from her original instructions, and bewildered herself in the mazes of unbridled fancy. This dereliction was the more flagrant and deplorable, as the Directory from which she professed to derive her authority was clear as the sun in the firmament, and which exacted an implicit adherence to its rules, in all who professed to accept them as their Guide. The regener-

ated Protestant Church bore a decided testimony against all the Romanist's unscriptural innovations, and whilst the community she had left multiplied their departures from the primitive standard, the daughter maintained, to a great extent, her fidelity, with a disposition still to advance toward perfection; whilst in her present condition, she presents the only close approximation to Apostolic direction and example of any Church upon earth.

The *Protestantism* here commended is to be understood in a *comprehensive*, not in a *sectarian* sense, as recognizing Private Judgment; and including, universally, all who make the Bible their only standard of appeal; who love God; and covet the influences of his Holy Spirit; who regard their neighbour as themselves; believe in the Divinity of Christ; obey his laws, and hope for salvation alone through the merits of his sacrifice. These are the leading features of Christianity;—the grand doctrines of the *Bible* and the *Reformation*, reduced to their quintessence. Whatever their subdivisions; all who hold these doctrines, whether they know it or not, are *Brethren*, having 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism.' Yet, however steadfastly maintained, Charity inculcates the tolerance of minuter, and conscientious differences, and, from the constitution of the human mind, (however acquiescence may be withheld) *forbearance towards all*: especially towards those who allow others to *think*, as well as themselves, and are no advocates for *Racks* and *Fagots*!

An advertence to the *Reformers* suggests, that if benefactors are to be esteemed, and the feeling is to be perpetuated, what a stupendous amount of gratitude is due to the illustrious men, so justly pronounced Christian Heroes, who so courageously rent the galling shackles of *Rome*, and liberated the human mind:—who so nobly contested with the powers of darkness, and into whose *rest we have entered*. Those undaunted spirits, from their successful exertions, are entitled, from every man deserving the name of Protestant, to a feeling of respect, only not amounting to idolatry, for they,

warring with Ecclesiastical Corruption, made, like the primitive Christians, the Bible their only guide, and undiverted by smiles or frowns, and at great personal cost, (often extending to bonds, and even to the *stake*!) resolutely rejected the complicated errors, and degrading superstitions of the *Papal Church*, with all its specious sophisms, and arrogated power. Such intrepidity should, and will, be had in everlasting remembrance. Nor is it a vain presumption, that their magnanimous example will stimulate to kindred exertions the disciples of Christ in future ages, who will, we are prophetically instructed, increase in numbers and purity, till *Zion* shall become 'the praise of the whole earth.' In the degree in which this anticipated jubilee advances, will the awful departures of the Papal Church from the words and ordinances of the Saviour progressively decline, and its system of deceptions be abandoned. In that period of joy, attendant on the downfall of *Popery*, and the ascendancy of the *Great Renovation*, it will almost exceed human credence, that such outrages on sense and Scripture;—such unholy precepts and exactions as are now enforced by the Romanists, could ever have so shackled reasonable beings, and have extended an influence so general over a beguiled, and priest-ridden world. .

There are indelible distinctions subsisting between the Protestant and Roman Catholic churches. The Protestant founds its faith unreservedly on the *Bible*. The Catholic, on the contrary, regards the clearest declarations of Scripture as of secondary importance. With Romanists, the great authoritative directories are *Tradition* (that surreptitious door through which *Artifice* may so freely enter!) with the often conflicting testimony of Popes, Councils, and Fathers. *Milton*, whose competence to judge of the *Fathers* (in their Ninety Folio Volumes) none will doubt, estimated them at rather a low rate (which judgment is confirmed by the high authority of *Mr. Isaac Taylor*, in his recent work, '*Ancient Christianity*'): and as for the decisions of Popes and Councils, the best judges regarded them as of too fluctuating

a nature to deserve *unreserved* credit. But whatever the qualifications of the Fathers, or the character of Popes and Councils, they are mere human authority. Protestants well remember they were all uninspired, and, consequently, regard their opinions as valueless, except as they coincide with Scripture. If they are unsustained by that *unerring standard*; if they accord not with '*the Law and the Testimonies*,'—as *sacred Directories*, they are wholly disregarded.' Moving in an atmosphere of light, the Protestant Church encourages *investigation* as her most powerful auxiliary; whilst the Romish Church, ever jealous of *inquiry*, loving darkness, and exacting from each adherent, blind subjection to her decrees, invests herself with mystery, and instinctively covets Ignorance as the congenial element in which she battens and acquires strength.

There is also a great *practical* difference between Catholics and Protestants. Whenever Romish Priests obtained the rule in England, they were distinguished for one class of consistencies;—a vindictive feeling toward all who dared to question any portion of their infallible creed. The class of *Sceptics* were generally consigned to a prison, where solitude, with a little salutary discipline, generally *solved their difficulties*; but those who were regarded as *decided Heretics*, who persisted in preferring Conscience to his Holiness the Pope, were often, through many a long period, consigned to the damp and dreary prison, and who, ultimately, at the stake, received the crown of martyrdom. Even this triumph was purchased at the expense of *insult*!—a Priest standing before the sufferer, and offering life on recantation!—But where was the recreant Protestant, who, in his last moments, confessed Antichrist, and denied his Saviour?

One other feature in Romanism should also be noticed. Romish Priests, on obtaining power (after the death of Edward the Sixth), with their usual insatiable appetite for violence, cried 'Havoc!' when Protestants were *burnt alive*! by scores and hundreds, in all parts of England! whereas, when the

woman (whose name is consigned to imperishable infamy!) who had signed such multitudes of *Protestant Death Warrants*, when she was called to go 'to her own place,' and the Reformed Faith again prevailed—what was the reaction? Although our renowned *Elizabeth* ascended the throne with such stimulating examples before her of fire and fagot, did she tread in the footsteps of her inhuman sister, and retaliate on Romanists? The conscience-smitten Papists, in conformity with their own spectacles of *Smithfield Illuminations*, expected a terrible visitation! But what was the unfolding vengeance?—not one Catholic was burnt through Elizabeth's long reign of forty-five years. There is also one other impressive truth. Through her whole reign, not one *Romanist* was executed *on account of his religion*. Many Priests were hung, but it was only after a fair trial, and a clear conviction of *Treason*, and under such circumstances they would be hung *in the present day*. Neither Protestants, nor Papists should forget these memorable facts. The one as a stigma, to excite shame; and the other, as a warning, not to admit the Lion into the Lobby!—on account of the difficulty that might arise in turning him out again!

The next great distinction (for it is of importance to state it) between Catholics and Protestants, is resolvable into one plain, primary question.—Is it lawful for *man* to resist the commands and ordinances of the *Most High*, so as to disregard the solemn penalties pronounced against those who 'add to,' or 'take from,' the Book of God? Catholics affirm, 'It is,' as their whole Service and Ritual testify. Here it must be remarked, what God has not *enjoined*, he has virtually *forbidden*—in all that concerns *his* religion. Romanists from their assumed liberty of innovation, have proceeded to unlimited extremes; the consequences of which will now be noticed, with the principle on which they are founded.

If on any pretext it be conceded to human capriciousness to 'add to,' or 'take from,' the Statuary Guide—the Writ-

ten Word—by introducing novel rites, and ceremonious forms of devotion, such as the Romish Church so unscrupulously exhibits; to this liberty, *what limit is to be prescribed?* Is not an avenue thereby opened to all the extravagances of lawless fancy? If one set of men, in one age, might arbitrarily establish a series of rites, ceremonies, and system of belief, unknown, or adverse to the Bible, and enforce their infraction by despotic penalties; whilst they attach to the Scriptures, without restraint, their own arbitrary meaning; another set of men, in a different age, would be entitled to the same privilege of revision—spoliation—and interpretation as their predecessors. These, also, in the exercise of uncontrolled power, might wholly, or partially, rescind the laws, observances, and constructions of their predecessors, and form new ceremonies, rites, and systems of belief;—while, in their unconstrained zeal, they might establish their own penalties, with stricter limits, and a more rigid intolerance!—thus striving to screw the human mind down to their own contracted standard. Nor should it be forgotten, that revolutions of this class might successively occur; so as to render it manifest, that the allowance of *any* human power to ‘add to,’ or ‘take from,’ or in any way to vary the sentiments or form of devotion established by Christ and his Apostles, would fatally affect Christians. They would be driven about by ‘every wind of doctrine’ and practice, and become strangers to the *abiding rock* and the *immoveable foundation*. This consideration confirms the above fundamental truth—that, whatever the Bible does not *authorize*, it virtually *prohibits*; and this at once sweeps irrevocably away, all the rubbish—the idle Rites and Ceremonies of the Popish Church.

In taking a retrospective view of the sentiments on *Romanism* here expressed, and feeling a solicitude not to advance *beyond* the bound of equity and truthful moderation (but still resolved *to come up to it*); the writer, after the calmest consideration, cannot allow himself to retract, in the least, any sentiment he has expressed concerning *Papists*, and the

Papacy. If he had felt less intensely, or had desired to *avert displeasure*, he might have softened some of his expressions, but such compliance, without being prompted by *apprehension*, would have violated fidelity. Those on whom the accusations rest will feel naturally dissatisfied, but they are biassed and incompetent judges. The more dispassionate readers, it is believed, will consider the error, if any, as having manifested itself on the side of leniency. The *Errors and Heresies of Romanists* have hitherto been dealt with too tenderly. *White* has not firmly been pronounced *white*, and *black, black*; from a forbearance, sometimes originating in indifference, but oftener from an unconsciousness of the insidious and dangerous enemy with whom the conservators of Protestantism have to contend. Disclaiming all party feeling, and every unjustifiable motive, with the hope of stripping deception of its guise, the naked Truth *has been*, and will *continue* to be uttered in these pages, without fear or favour, although accompanied with an endeavour in exposing error, not to exceed the strict limits of justice. Timid spirits, to whose breasts, firmness is a stranger, and who would smite an assassin with a straw, will probably condemn an energy to which themselves are strangers. Such will be likely to regard *that* as declamation, which is no other than fair deduction from previous argument. These may pursue their own tame, but safe course, yet should they exercise forbearance towards those, who, for the sacred cause of Verity, expose themselves, unmindfully, to the anonymous shaft, or the more open assaults of visible foes.

The Writer may venture to intimate, that, if in his humble endeavour to resist *Antichrist*, he should have discovered, in some of his language, a somewhat unusual earnestness, the *Cause* should be remembered;—the vindication of *Eternal Truth*, with the exposure of *Pernicious Error*! Objectors also should recollect, how subdued the utterance of rebuke here adopted has been, compared with the expressions of Saint Paul, when contemplating *the same objects*. The

Apostle, in directing his prophetic glance over remote generations, beheld this same *Antichrist* incarnated in the *Great Romish Heresiarch*, widely extending his sway, and augmenting his assumptions; even the *Lord of the Seven Hills*, rising into temporal, as well as spiritual sovereignty;—proud—tyrannous—cruel—luxurious!—claiming, or who *once* claimed (now reluctantly resigned, to be resumed, he hopes, in some more propitious season)—the *Vice-gerency of God!*—with the world as his *patrimony*; including his ancient prerogatives—the disposition of crowns, and the controlment of *allegiance*. In earlier times, dissentients who in the least questioned the Sovereign Pontiff's authority, or suspected his decisions, though arising out of the most flagrant usurpations, and violations of Scripture, were made to feel how terrible was Popish indignation, when all the gradations of punishment, down to the *stake*, were arrayed against them. Ecclesiastical corruptions still increased with every succeeding age, but all despotisms, whether exercised over *mind*, or *body*, it is righteously ordained, in passing *the limit of forbearance*, awaken a countervailing spirit, from the outrage offered to justice and human feeling. This revulsion occurred at the *Reformation*;—so memorable for the benign influence it shed on human affairs; prior to which auspicious era, *Popery* reigned with an absolute sway, and (through its malign influence) had disseminated over Europe, together with the most shuddering cruelties, a moral eclipse, and an Egyptian darkness!

The Apostle, as the vision of the *Grand Apostacy* floated before his oppressed gaze—the glare of 'spiritual wickedness in high places,' inspired by holy indignation, thus designates the *Roman Heretical Church*;—so pre-eminently distinguished for its inveterate persecution, and intense hatred of the *True Church!* 'Perilous times shall come!'—'seducing spirits!'—'speaking lies in hypocrisy!'—maintaining their assumed claims, and deceptions, by 'signs and lying wonders!'—'after the working of Satan, with all deceivableness

of unrighteousness !'—'their consciences seared as with a hot iron !'—'from the truth turned unto fables !'—'Forbidding to marry !'—'Commanding to abstain from meats !'—'Teaching for doctrines *the commandments of men* !'—'Giving heed to *seducing spirits*, and the doctrines of devils !' whom the Lord, (though he bear long with them,) 'shall consume with the breath of his mouth !'

It may be asked, is there, from Apostolic times to the present moment, any *Heretical Church*, on record, except the *Catholic*, corresponding with this description? The implicated party may question the application, but let them point out any Church to which the appropriation is more clear ! Every impartial mind must admit the resemblance to Catholicity, and confess, that there is no other class of men than *Romanists*, nor system than the *Papacy*, to which, by any latitude of construction, these accusations *can* be ascribed ; and here the similitude is graphically exact, The portraiture, awful as it is, corresponds with the exactness of a parallel, to the one superlatively corrupt Church ; by numerous indications, reprobated of God for its long-continued and flagitious crimes, and which is symbolically prefigured by the Apocalyptical '*Three unclean spirits*,' to be finally vanquished in the great battle of 'Armageddon.'

However opposed by *Papists*, this is the inspired description of *Romanism* ;—which has proved, by its actions on the theatre of the world, and through a succession of ages, that its chief solitudes are *earthly* ; its worship *Mammon*, and its institutions eminently anti-scriptural. The *Papists'* simple declaration to the contrary is entitled to no regard. They may advance a verbal denial, and assume qualities to which they are not entitled ; but Truth is not so easily beguiled. She demands more substantial evidence than the mere breath of assertion. She remembers that professions are no criterion of the real character, either of individuals, or societies, otherwise than as they are sustained by corresponding actions. *Romanists* will not relieve themselves of these ponderous

charges till they appeal to facts, and otherwise derive their acquittal, not from asseveration, but, from the *Bible*, the only admissible authority.

If a doubt should prevail, in some undecided minds, that a resemblance still existed between *Saint Peter*, and *Saint Peter's Chair*; the *College of Fishermen*, and the *College of Cardinals*, to dispel the illusion—let the scene be withdrawn, and the likeness appear! (referring to what *has been*, rather than what *is*.) Behold! reposing on his sumptuous throne—the *Sovereign Pontiff*!—haply raised ‘out of the dung-hill,’ whose ‘Fathers’ *Job* ‘would not have set with the dogs of his flocks,’ but now, in the fluctuation of human affairs, and its mysterious transformations, ‘the dross is become fine gold.’ Obscurity is raised into an ethereal luminary! The humblest of the humble (or rather the proudest of the proud) is environed with the excess of worldly splendour! Palaces, crowns, ermine, princes, legates, bishops, nuncios, vicars—apostolical and cardinal lords, &c. &c. whilst the ‘*Holy Father*’ (thus impiously arrogating the *Title of Deity*!) generally owes his advancement to this giddy elevation, through conflicting *foreign influence*; and the chalice of *corruption*, full and overflowing; yet is the choice accompanied with *one* merit, that of there being no *hypocritical* advertence to *spiritual fitness*.

Whilst the echoing choir, and long-drawn notes of melting harmony, imperceptibly prepare the heart *for the reception of error* and delusive impressions—touching the earth, yet (in his own apprehension) allied to heaven, *His Holiness*, even the *Most Holy Father*, looking down on the loftiest of Potentates, with awful majesty, receives (or, rather, till recently) received the profound prostrations of his crouching and scarlet menials! In the midst of this spectacle of glory—to show how far *pride* can advance, and *degradation* extend, this ‘*Vicegerent of Deity*,’ as the height of condescension, present even his *Toe* for their Reverences’, and High Mightinesses’ *salutation*! There in the midst of terrestrial grandeur, and

sycophantic ascriptions, forgetful of his union with the dust, the '*Man of Sin*,' still assuming humility, though bending under the load of human honours—forced on his reluctant nature, 'Sits in the Temple of God, showing himself that he is God!' drinking in his adulations, and scattering around his crushing anathemas, but ineffectual blessings, his head bearing the Tiara, 'inscribed with words of blasphemy,' and from his throat pouring forth 'his great swelling words of vanity.'

However *Holy* his present '*Holiness*' may be, (like all his predecessors) one important branch of Christian morals he has yet to learn:—the *forgiveness of Enemies*! There is *one*. *Foe* (a determined one, no doubt) who never did harm to any man, yet his *Holiness* bears to him the most *implacable hatred*; and though he would not *destroy*, he would fain *incarcerate*, and ever deny to him the *light of day*! Such is his enmity, that he directs to him his *loudest thunders* and *bitterest fulminations*.—This unforgiven Foe, is—*The Bible*!

Are not these the '*Grievous Wolves*,' who were to 'enter in' (foretold by the Sacred Records with such impressive clearness) in their pitiless fury, as the innumerable *Martyr-Fires* testify, 'not sparing the *Flock*!'—remorseless, '*drunk with the blood of the Saints*!'—on whose head rest the *curse*s of persecuted, and *expiring millions*!—It would be reversing the order of Nature, if the *Pope*, and his *kindred Priests*, did not proscribe the *Bible*, which so emphatically denounces their duplicity, and emblazons their crimes!—And yet, this is the *Church*, impure as it is ferocious!—mild, when in subjection, and restrained by power, but savage in strength; and as expediency directs, either the *Lamb* or the *Lion*!—*This* is the Church, which, in the present day, can allure so many, from the *healthful green pastures of Protestantism*, to the *pestilential marshes of Campagna*, so many of the *Lame*!—the *Halt*,—and the *STONE BLIND*!

A FEW observations will now be made on the practical working of Popery. Although St. Dominic, (Domingo de Guzman,) a Spaniard, born 1170, was the Founder of the Inquisition, yet, at the period of the Reformation, and subsequently, the conducting of the Institution was and has been so generally transferred to the Jesuits, selected for their unflinching perseverance, and unmitigated severity, that it has not been unusual to denominate the Inquisition, Loyolian, rather than Dominican. This world of ours has produced many eminent men, in Art, Science, Learning, and Morals; but whilst each pursued the object congenial with his taste, none carried that object to perfection, and all contended with competitors. St. Dominic formed an exception. In his peculiar department, he stood alone,—unrivalled,—without competition,—the undisputed monarch,—the absolute paragon! In him appeared the concentration, and sublimation of Evil, reduced to its essence;—a destitution of any one quality that, by possibility, could be mistaken for Good. The dominant passion of his soul was—Cruelty! a sublime disdain of human suffering! In his gloomy ruminations, he conceived it attainable, to produce throughout the world,—an unity,—a oneness in the Papal Faith, and that by the mere sacrifice of a little feeling,—the steady infliction of Death on all who questioned Rome's supremacy, or adhered not to her formularies. The suggestion, as might have been expected, obtained the cordial approbation of "His Holiness," who as a proof of his admiration, and concurrence, conferred on St. Dominic himself, the high insignia of—The First Inquisitor General, with an unlimited sway in the fulfilment of all his resolute designs to benefit the Church. The end, of course, sanctifying the means.

The Inquisition being thus established, St. Dominic, with a chosen band of obedient disciples, was sent forth by the Pope, into all the kingdoms of Christendom, to spy out, and punish all Heretics and Jews! From this circumstance they were called Inquisitors!—Being now invested with absolute power over life and limb, such an office, occupied by such a man,

could not be inefficiently filled. As an evidence of his adaptation to the appointed work, he had four-score Heretics beheaded in a short time, and four hundred burnt ; all in his presence ! Independently of this grand display of sacerdotal zeal and violence, the instances were innumerable of individual men and women—Heretics, successively hung and burnt, by this Papal Executioner !

But the widest range for the Inquisitor's sanguinary career was presented in the 13th century, when Rome armed all her power to extinguish the light which had long secretly, and extensively prevailed in the regions of Piedmont. The first Crusade against the Albigenses commenced in 1297. Independently of the prospect of plunder, the Pope promised a pardon for sins, however heinous, with Paradise in reversion, to all the faithful sons of the Church who would unite their efforts with his own, in an attempt to crush the Monster,—Heresy ! At the call of "His Holiness," tens of thousands responded, impatient to expiate their transgressions, as well as to add a little to their worldly substance, by robbing, and mercilessly shedding the blood of Israelites, and the true followers of Christ.

According to Rapin, Mosheim, Sismondi, M'Crie, Jones, Southey, and other trust-worthy Historians, Death and Destruction, in the 14th century universally prevailed ; arising from the efforts made by the Papacy to enforce its own Articles and Ceremonies on every People, Tongue, and Tribe. The Church of Rome, in the plenitude of its pride and power, determined to limit thought : to fetter the human mind ; to coerce the world ! She imperiously resolved that all the communities of earth should implicitly and unhesitatingly adopt the One Creed, as propounded by the Consistory of Rome ! In the furtherance of this grand priestly projection, and under the guidance of heartless Inquisitors, they commenced their assault on the Albigenses. Leaving minuter atrocities, the Catholics burnt alive several hundred Heretics, (men and women) at Carcassone, for what they called, "Errors

of Faith ;" and, as a milder punishment, (out of humanity) fifty were hanged. — Their great and unpardonable crimes,— attachment to the Scriptures, as their only rule of faith and practice, and refusing to acknowledge and obey the Pope, as the Almighty's Vicegerent on Earth.

Yet these actions, terrible as they were, dwindled into insignificance, compared with the horrors practised by the Papists, at Beziers, the whole of whose inhabitants, to the number of fifteen thousand were sacrificed by the infuriated Mercenaries of Rome, under Priestly direction. Superadded to the native residents, some thousands had crowded into the City, from the adjacent Villages,—then being wasted by the Catholic Soldiery. All fell in the general massacre ! Sismondi remarks, ' This whole multitude, at the moment when the Crusaders became masters of the gates, took refuge in the churches, of which the great Cathedral of St. Nicaise contained the greater number. The Canons, clothed in their choral habits, surrounded the altar, and sounded the bells, as if to express their prayers to the furious assailants, but these supplications were as little heeded as those of the human voice. Many of the individuals who had repaired to Beziers, and the churches, were Roman Catholics, but they all suffered alike, for when the Knights of the army inquired of the Papal Legate, Arnold Amalric, Abbot of Citeaux, in what way they were to distinguish the Roman Catholics from the Heretics, so as to save the one, and destroy the other, he replied, ' Kill all. The Lord will know them that are his ' The historian continues.—' The bells ceased not to sound, till of that immense multitude who had taken refuge in the Cathedral Church, all were massacred. Neither were those spared who had resorted to the other churches. Seven thousand dead bodies were counted in that of the Magdalen alone. When the Crusaders had slain the whole of the inhabitants, and pillaged the houses, they set fire to the city, and reduced it to one funeral pile !

Milton's fine sonnet on these, and subsequent enormities will not be forgotten.

'Avenge, O Lord ! thy slaughter'd saints, whose bones
Lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold
E'en them who kept thy truth so pure of old
When all our fathers worshipp'd wood and stones,
Forget not ; in thy book record their groans,
Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese, that roll'd
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they—
To heaven. Their martyrs' blood and ashes sow
O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway
The Triple Tyrant ; that from these may grow
A hundred fold, who having learnt thy way
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.

Passing over all the prodigious miracles, gravely ascribed by Catholic writers to St. Dominic, which surpass in number and monstrosity those attributed to our own Dunstan, a more particular reference will be made to the constitutional cruelty of the Romish Church, with which, in the previous pages, it has been so directly charged.

When the Albigenses, and their kindred sufferers, the Waldenses, (as the priests thought) had been extirpated, they necessarily relaxed their efforts, with something of the state of Titus's soldiers, who were weary of slaughtering the Jews. But a new class of foes had now arisen. The Lollards appeared an offshoot of the Albigenses. With a renewed zeal, these the Romanists hunted out, persecuted, and despoiled in every land, year after year, and age after age, with true Popish inveteracy. It could not be denied that the Lollards were good citizens, and, according to the Bible standard, sound Christians, but these were poor recommendations. They came not to mass ! They adored

and supplicated not the Virgin! They bowed not down to the Pope, the Almighty's Vicegerent! and consequently were denounced of the Church. Subject to such accusations, and under such a ban, they became lawful prey, and were thrown without the range of human sympathies. After these also had been silenced, or exterminated, the zealous upholders of 'His Holiness,' reluctantly, but of necessity, suspended their calling, from the absence of 'malignants,' in any comprehensive sense, on whom to expend their rage. They still looked vigilantly around,—with a feeling bordering on hope. An object at length appears! Luther has started into notice! The Reformation, which has now progressed, gives new vigour to their languid arm, and revives their dormant ferocity! This New Heresy, they were reflective enough well to know, must be put down by all the appliances of power, or otherwise so formidable a Foe would put them down! Two Cæsars could not exist in the same world.

Not to remark on other countries, each abounding with awful persecuting examples, particularly Flanders, the recital of which would afflict and horrify every humane heart, a succinct notice will be taken of the excessive barbarities exercised by Romanists in Spain and Portugal. The Jews were here persecuted by the Loyolians with the most unrelenting rigour. Although inoffensive and inobtrusive, they still were Jews, while, moreover, many of them were rich, and the Jesuits judged it quite compatible with right, in an enlarged and clerical sense, that the denunciations of the Church should first, and inexorably alight on the opulent, as confiscation furnished a large proportion of the revenues on which the immaculate Priesthood subsisted. (What an insufferable delinquent one of the Representatives of London would then and there have been!)—Jews in those perilous times, when the world had but one master—the Church, found it necessary to maintain the exterior appearance of those around them, so that the prying Inquisitor was compelled often to recur to inferential evidence, such as the never purchasing pork, or

wearing a clean shirt on Saturdays. This excited suspicion, and which led to other and undeniable proof. So absolute was priestly sway in those periods, that it was deemed heretical, and deserving of death, to deny that the Inquisition was a Righteous Tribunal, as it implied a doubt of the justice and infallibility of the Pope.

To record all the principal *auto da fés* which occurred in Spain and Portugal at this time, would fill a volume, especially inclusive of the individual burnings of Heretics. From the Pontificate of Sextus IV., 1479 to 1520, it was calculated that in Seville alone, 4,000 Heretics had been burnt, and 30,000 deprived of their property. Many of the Jews to save their lives nominally embraced the Catholic Faith. On these an attentive eye was always kept, and with the slightest evidence of insincerity, particularly if they were rich, the flames were their inevitable portion. At one time 52 of both sexes were burnt for Judaizing, (relapsing after conversion.) Inveteracy, united with folly, so far prevailed, that on another occasion, the images of 25 Jews, who had escaped were burnt, together with the bodies of 46 Heretics dug from their graves; the odours of such, when burning, being pronounced sweet! In addition to these, crowds were tortured, or condemned to perpetual imprisonment, while others were sent to the galleys. In the different parts of that one province, and in a short period, 20,000 men and women were either burnt, racked, or transported to the arid sands of Africa. So voracious were the Jesuit Inquisitors in equally destroying both Jews and Heretics that their sanctity appeared to themselves to rise in proportion to the extent in which they wasted human life.

That which augmented their cruelty toward the Jews, arose from their Catholic Judges proscribing all who had even Jewish blood in their veins. The suspected individual who could not prove an exemption from Israelitish parentage for several generations, was deemed amenable to the Inquisition, and alike forfeited possessions and life. In a later time

Protestants were sacrificed at the stake, or on the gallows, with the same promptitude and indifference with which reptiles are destroyed. As a further evidence of the power, and horror excited by Inquisitors, as well as the prostrate subjection to which even Catholic families were reduced, at the summons of the 'Holy Office,' (from the suspicion of Heresy) parents delivered up their children, husbands their wives, and masters their servants, without the temerity of apparent dread, or reluctance.

Every feature of the Inquisition marked its diabolical character, the prisoners were neither confronted with accusers, nor informed of their alleged crime. Their condition was the more terrible from the mysterious agency with which they were surrounded ; where equity as a regulating influence was derided, or unknown. Their incarceration also depended on the decision of a morose and vindictive Judge, invested with unlimited power, whose spirit appeared to luxuriate on human suffering, and which left prisoners no prospect but misery, and (from their intensity of suffering) no hope but the grave, or the stake. At this time, so usually was the fagot-pile the ultimate consequence of imprisonment, that the friends of men and women once seized by Inquisitors for Heresy, considered their relatives as virtually dead, and assumed their mourning. How could a sense of security, or consolatory feeling exist, when law and justice were discarded ? when all Judicial proceedings were veiled in night, and the adjudgments of guilt depended, not on evidence, but on the Inquisitor General's will, whose heart was case-hardened in cruelty ? who ruled the very consciences of all his subordinates, and from whose decision there was no appeal.

After lingering in loathsome gaols for an indefinite period, at the appointed time all the prisoners were conducted to the presence of the awful Jesuit-tribunal ; some few to hear their acquittal ; others to be told of mitigated penalties, but the far larger part, to learn their fiery doom. Yet this for-

mality was but an idle form, for all, both men and women by the dress they wore became apprised of their sentence. Those who appeared in their own clothes (after all their endurance) were acquitted. Those who wore a yellow dress were also acquitted, but deprived of all their possessions. Those who wore a coat of red serge, (the far largest proportion) with the figures of devils on it, were condemned to the flames. The victims appointed for execution were then handed over to the Civil Magistrates, who confined them awhile in dungeons, and when the number had sufficiently accumulated, the whole, like a gaol-delivery, were made to form a superb auto-da-fé.

The formalities of this grand display were somewhat curious ; if such a term can be applied to such horrors. On the day of execution, the Dominican Friars led the way, then the Heretics followed, dressed in black, each holding a lighted candle, and with their feet bare. Every prisoner was attended on either side by a Jesuit. After the prisoners came a troop of Familiars on horseback, then officers of the Inquisition on mules, and last of all the Inquisitor General on a white horse, (an emblem of his purity !) led by two men with black hats, and, from some unknown cause, green hatbands. The prisoners after listening to a sermon in praise of the Inquisition, and the enormity of an heretical faith, heard a priest read their crimes, and condemnation, when they were delivered over to the executioner, who, even then, with the usual hypocrisy, was earnestly entreated by the Jesuits 'not to touch their blood !' The Heretics being now chained, each to his stake, and seated on a high chair, (that all might view the wrestling and gasping criminals, and their deaths become the more lingering !) the fires were simultaneously lighted, and the emancipated Heretics burnt, amid the shouts of frantic spectators ! Can such deeds be surpassed out of hell !

'On these occasions, the very nature of man seemed to be changed. Spectacles that usually revolted, (through the cal-

lousness of Catholic superstition) were now exulted in. At the burning of a score or two of Protestants, or Jews, kings and queens often assembled, with their whole court, rejoicing to witness so exhilarating a sight. The scene resembled a carnival, bordering on saturnalia;—all to behold Protestant Heretics, or Israelites, mercilessly burnt to death! On these occasions, the chief agents, the Jesuits, threw off all disguise. During the death-struggles of the sufferers, they vociferated curses on Heretics, and danced equally at the writhings of Jews, or the contortions of Protestants. As an indirect flattery to themselves, and the deepest reflection on their victims, while deriding their agonies, they upbraided one class as ‘Imps of Hell,’ and the other as the ‘Spawn of the New Religion.’ (An impartial survey would have instructed them that the Religion they denominated New, was as old as Christ and his Apostles.) To perpetuate so pleasurable a sight, these savage exhibitions often formed subjects for their best Artists.

A recurrence to past enormities excites a repugnance which nothing could overcome but solicitude for the establishment of Truth, and the vital interests of man. In consistency with these objects, it is affirmed, that the History of the Heretical Church of Rome is indeed written in Blood! A glance merely has been taken at Spain and Portugal, but from its black pre-eminence, France equally claims a passing notice. In that Nation, during the 16th century, scenes of cruelty were exhibited, unexampled in the whole world, out of Popish Countries. Numerous families of men, women, and children, of the Reformed Faith, experienced the crushing weight of Catholic wrath. Those who dared to entertain opinions adverse to the Roman Standard were often hurled from precipices; others were immured in prisons, tortured on racks, or consumed at the stake. The weakness of Kings, and the servile spirit of ministers, in these times, conferred on the Church unlimited domination; and again it must be asked, In what age has it been known, that Ecclesiastics, when in-

vested with power, have distinguished themselves for their moderation? On the contrary, as steady as is the Pole-Star of the heavens, in all Popish countries, Clerical sway has ever been associated with violence and blood!—and of these atrocities, a large proportion impresses indelible stains on Catholic France.

A brief reference has been made to the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, when the Protestant Huguenots, for their offences, in interpreting their own Bible,—withdrawing from Mass,—and not submitting to the Pope, were indiscriminately slaughtered. A few supplementary notices will be subjoined. On this occasion cruelty was displayed, in combination with the most Satanic perfidy; both, 'on an unparalleled scale. Charles IX., in conjunction with his Jesuit Advisers (who had inculcated on him, 'What is the Chaff to the Wheat'), suddenly changed his deportment towards his Protestant subjects. While the most murderous purposes lurked in his heart, he assumed the feelings of amity; deplored former differences, and testified his readiness to cover all that was past with 'the mantle of forgetfulness.' So much frank avowal disarmed suspicion, and the long-oppressed Protestants thought that brighter suns were about to shine. Charles, to testify his amicable spirit, invited the brave Admiral Coligni, and the leading Protestants, from all parts of his dominions, to repair to Paris, and join in the festivities which he had prepared for their reconciliation. They all met, gladness in every countenance, and joy at every heart; but the Angel of Death was near. In the midst of hilarity and confidence the signal was given. On the 24th of August, 1572, the fatal bell tolled! when the work of destruction commenced! (The Red Cross, painted on every Protestant's house, directing the assassins!) For seven long days and nights the poignard was plied incessantly! All the bad passions of the worst of men were enlisted on this occasion; for the slaughter of Heretics had been inculcated on the

edicts of Paris, as an act acceptable to God, and approved of the Church.

When the wealth of Protestants is considered, and that it was an accepted canon, that, on the infliction of death, plunder became legalised,—at least by connivance, if not by law, every mind can call up the scenes of horror, perpetrated on an occasion when this unbounded latitude was given to robbers and murderers. Thousands were remorsefully sacrificed! ‘Spare my grey hairs!’ said the good Admiral Coligni, to a young man, rushing toward him with his blood-red weapon. The next moment it pierced his heart! But detail is impossible. All alike were sacrificed, without distinction of age or sex. They were Heretics! that authorised the deed! and now the streets of Paris literally ran with Protestant Blood! During this massacre, which reflects ignominy on man, Charles, exulting in the success of his plans, and reluctant to suspend so noble a work, hailed on the flagging assassins! The River Seine, into which multitudes of the ghastly and mangled victims were thrown, like the ancient Nile, appeared converted into blood. At these horrible scenes, no one testified more exultant joy than the Young Queen. Nor was the public feeling violated by such shuddering transactions. The Priests affirmed it to have been the righteous judgment of God on Heretics! while the Parliament of Paris congratulated the King on his spirit and invincible firmness. Charles, after his machinations, had procured the assassination of so many thousands of his best subjects in Paris, and throughout all his provinces, to commemorate so magnanimous an exploit, and that posterity might know to whom to ascribe the honour, had a medal struck! Rapin says, on one side appeared the King on his throne, treading on the dead bodies of the Huguenots; and, on the reverse, the Arms of France, with the inscription, ‘*Pietas excitavit justiciam.*’ (Piety excited justice.) The end of such a man, or rather monster, as Charles IX., is

instructive. He lived not quite two years after these scenes of blood. When the first excitement had subsided into calm reflection, conscience awoke with her retributive sting. His looks became fierce. A preternatural glow suffused his cheek. His appetite failed. His sleep was broken. His mental agonies were pungent, unmitigated by flattery, soft music, or the dance ; and this Prince of assassins died at the age of 24 ;—leaving a name imperishable in the annals of infamy !

But the triumphs of St. Bartholomew were not confined to France. When the tidings of this general massacre of the Protestants reached the Eternal City, the transports of the Pope, Cardinals, and Priests, were unbounded. Congratulations prevailed, and in imitation of his beloved, and ‘most christian’ son of France, His Holiness also testified his exultation, by striking a commemorative medal, presenting Gregory the XIII. on one side, and on the reverse an Angel with a cross in one hand, and a sword in the other, slaying the Protestants !

For the joy of all christians who found their faith on the Bible, Popery is now happily declining in every kingdom of Europe, except England ! where, if reason had a voice, or experience could teach, it might least be expected to find favour ; although here the recusitation is confined chiefly to the region of Exeter, as a focus, and a few other dark localities. Yet the strange paroxysm will be brief. The good sense, right feeling, and biblical knowledge of this enlightened nation and day, will speedily recover the lost ground, and effect triumphant reprisals on Catholicity ; producing less of joy for a victory, than consolation that immortal spirits are rescued from dangerous error, and have exchanged darkness for light.

The Inquisition, also, which has so long afflicted the world is now contracting its influence, and will speedily disappear as a concession to universal abhorrence ! It has proved itself an effective instrument in upholding for many centuries,

Priestcraft, and the Papacy, but its days are numbered, and the Friends of Truth and Humanity will soon behold it prostrate in the dust! Nor is the representation here given of the injuries inflicted on man by Catholic Institutions, overwrought. It fails only in restraint and forbearance. That the picture might have been exhibited in darker shades, is proved by the declaration of a Member of the French Chamber, a man of genius and high character, who recently affirmed, uncontradicted, in the presence of several Gallican Bishops, that the Inquisition, from the period of its establishment, had sacrificed FIVE MILLIONS of human beings! called Heretics!* That is, in the strictest sense, murdered them! and that alone for asserting private judgment, not recognizing the Pope and his usurpations, and preferring the instructions of the Bible to the teaching of Priests! To increase the enormous amount of suffering involved in the slaughter of this great multitude, the endurance must be remembered,—the protracted and severe misery of the still greater number of unrecorded victims who lingered and perished, after being racked and tortured, and bound to blood-stained floors or stone walls, by ponderous fetters, amid dark, and cold, and lonely cells, or in subterranean recesses; no heart to pity, and no eye to behold,—but that of God, and the iron-hearted Inquisitors!—an excess of wickedness which throws into shade—all the violent deaths charged on Pagans toward their fellows from the creation of the world! And by these means Romanists attempted to recommend the religion of Christ! to exhibit its benign spirit, and to arrest and captivate the wandering and profane!

Can it, or should it be forgotten, (when presenting so illustrious an example of the true character of the Papal Church.) that the murders and aggravated atrocities before enumerated were committed by a class of men, arrogating superior sanctity; by Ecclesiastics, servants, professedly of the Most High! the consecrated followers of the meek and lowly Saviour!—the Disciples of Him who enjoined forgiveness and

* Victor Hugo.

love, as the characteristics of his adherents, and who declared that the mercy we showed to others, should be the measure which ourselves should receive when all hearts were judged. Truth is of too sacred a nature to be sacrificed to courtly compromise, and painful as is the declaration, it would be an insult to charity itself, not to pronounce Romanism, with all its crimes and errors, an opprobrium to the christian name ! In the plain language of fidelity, it has proved itself a bane to man ! It has repelled, by its deeds, the anxious spiritual inquirer, and caused the enemy to blaspheme ! Every page of Scripture nauseates the pretensions of so heretical a church. Many of her doctrines, and more of her observances, are directly adverse to the inculcations of the Saviour and his Apostles ; and yet to secure a conformity with her own monstrous creed and ceremonies, she has murdered her millions, and tortured her tens of millions ! and all these enormities resulting from, and founded alone, on the simple authority and decretals of Popes and Conclaves ! This language by some will be deemed severe ; but the occasion demands an enunciation of the undisguised truth ; and it is consolatory to know that those alone will complain on whom the charges rest. As the only legitimate appeal, let the dissentients do violence to their habits and inclinations, and read those pages which they have hitherto so mournfully neglected, or despised. In perusing that Infallible Standard, they will descry an ample justification of every allegation here advanced ; and, if conscience be other than seared, they will become confounded at the fearful reckoning that awaits them, when false brethren shall stand stripped of their disguise, and, (of the Catholic Church, and her guilty agents,) God shall make 'Inquisition for Blood !'

A parting word respecting that Institution whose very name has always struck terror even into the hearts of the Roman Community. The Inquisition was deemed so effective, and became so popular with the Catholic clergy, that the priests in many of the chief cities of the European con-

tinent, and of colonies dependent on its kings, solicited from 'His Holiness' the privilege of having, 'in their own borders' an Establishment so valuable for the utter extinction of all Heresy and Schism! The Vicegerent of Deity rarely denied so Catholic and humane a supplication, but secrecy was the watchword adopted, and none but sworn officials have ever been allowed (except under popular outbreaks) to inspect their whole 'Labyrinth of Horrors!' Some indeed, under peculiar circumstances, have been permitted to take a superficial glance at one and another of these Loyolean dens, of which number was our own philanthropist Howard. When in Spain, he visited the Inquisition at Valladolid. The following is his description.

'The letters of Count Campomanes procured my admission at Valladolid. I was received at the Inquisition-Prison by the two inquisitors, their secretary, and two magistrates, and conducted into several rooms. On the side of one room was the picture of an Auto-da-fé in 1667, when ninety seven persons (heretics) were burnt. At that time the Spanish court resided at Valladolid.—The tribunal-room is like that at Madrid, but has an altar, and a door (with three locks) into the secretary's room, over which was inscribed, that the greater excommunication was denounced against all strangers who presume to enter. In two other tribunal-rooms I saw the insignia of the Inquisition. In a large room I saw on the floor and shelves many prohibited books, some of which were English. In another room I saw multitudes of crosses, beads, and small pictures. The painted cap was also showed me, and the vestments for the unhappy victims. (heretics)—After several consultations I was permitted to go up a private staircase, by which prisoners were brought to the tribunal. This leads to a passage with several doors in it, which I was not permitted to enter. On one of the secretaries telling me, 'None but prisoners enter those rooms,' I answered, 'I would be confined for a

'month to satisfy my curiosity;' he replied, 'None come out under three years, and they take the oath of secrecy.'— 'It is well known that from this court there is no appeal. I might say how horrid the secrecy and severity of it appears. I could not but observe that the sight struck terror into the common people as they passed! It is styled by a monstrous abuse of words, 'The Holy and Apostolic Court of the Inquisition! '*

In the preceding pages, a faint but faithful portraiture has been given of Catholicism; of its unscriptural basis, and moral deformity, such as might excite astonishment in the impartial spirit, that a system so adverse to sacred truth, and hostile to the best interests of man, should ever have obtained a temporary, but especially so continuous an acceptance among rational beings who possessed the Scriptures. But no limit can be assigned to the forms of mental aberration, nor to human craft and credulity. If the fact had not been substantiated, what hardy calculator could have predicted that minds might be found in intelligent England, so abased as to turn voluntarily from Protestantism, with all its illuminations, to adopt the monstrous dogmas and absurdities of Popery! Yet even in this land of light and Bibles, men have appeared, the subjects of an epidemic infatuation, who after having deliberately sworn adherence to the reformed faith, have flown off to all the revolting corruptions of the Vatican! This is the melancholy consequence of exclusively and slavishly deferring to the writers and synodical decisions of the Dark Ages, when errors and corruptions had so notoriously crept into the church. It is appealing from the infallible word of God, to the fallible word of man! It is the folly of extolling the contaminated stream, and despising the pure fountain!

The Puseyites as a class, have been regarded by some as approximating to, if they are not identified with Romanists, from having adopted so many of the ceremonies of the

*Howard on Prisons.

Romish Church, together with some of her most offensive doctrines. It cannot be denied, that too much cause exists for entertaining these apprehensions. It is a feeble subterfuge to which some of the justly suspected resort, who, to ward off the charge of attachment to Rome, declaim stoutly against Popery, whilst all their actions testify that at heart, they are themselves, in the substantial sense, *rank Papists* ! as much so as their more honest yet erratic precursors, who in their blind excentricities, have renounced Protestantism, and with the zeal of new converts, plunged heedlessly into all the enormities of that mass of corruption, the Romish Church ! * But these are deep politicians, who have not yet

* The following is a list of Clergyman who have renounced, during the present mania, their profession of Protestantism, and, from the love of 'pure christianity,' have gone over to the Popish Church ! The friends of Truth, and the Reformation need not tremble. This formidable looking list of Apostatizers from their earlier faith, form but a paltry fraction of the English Clergy, amounting only to the 1-240th part !

Rev. Bernard Smith, Rector of Leadenham, Lincolnshire
 Rev. George Talbot, M.A., Vicar of Evercreech, Somerset
 Rev. Daniel Parsons, M.A., Oriel college, Oxford
 Rev. Charles Seager, M.A., Worcester college, Oxford
 Rev. Thomas Burton, M.A., Curate of Trinity Church, Brompton
 Rev. H. G. Penny, M.A., Curate of Dorton, Bucks
 Rev. J. C. Smith, M.A., Curate, Dawlish
 Rev. J. M. Cassea, M.A., Incumbent, Bridgwater
 Rev. G. Ward, M.A., Fellow of Baliol college, Oxford
 Rev. Brook Brides, B.A., Oriel college, Oxford
 Rev. Ambrose St. John, M.A., Curate of Walmer, Kent
 Rev. J. H. Newman, B.D., Fellow of Oriel college, Oxford
 Rev. S. Bowles, B.D., Deacon
 Rev. Richard Stanton, B.A., Deacon
 Rev. J. Walker, M.A., Brazennose college, Oxford
 Rev. R. Neve, M.A., Rector of Pool-Keynes
 Rev. F. Oakley, M.A., Sen. Fellow of Baliol college, Oxford
 Rev. C. H. Collins, M. A., Curate of St. Mary's, Oxford
 Rev. W. Wingfield, M.A.
 Rev. F. Faber, M.A., Fellow of University college, Oxford
 Rev. J. W. Marshall, B.A., Incumbent of Swallow Cliffe, Wilts.

declared themselves, nor are they likely so to do, with so little in *prospect*, and so much in *possession*. Contrasted

Rev. J. M. Glenie, B.A., Curate of St. Mark, Somerset
 Rev. H. G. Coope, M.A., Deacon
 Rev. B. H. Berks, B.A., Curate of Arley, Cheshire
 Rev. M. W. Russell, M.A., Rector of Benfield, Northampton
 Rev. R. A. Coffin, M.A., Curate of St. Mary Mag. Pa., Oxford
 Rev. H. J. Marshall, B.A., Curate of Archdeacon R. Wilberforce
 Rev. E. E. Estcourt, M.A., Exeter college, Oxford
 Rev. E. Browne, Curate of Bawdsey, Suffolk
 Rev. J. S. Northcote, M.A., Curate of Ilfracombe, Devon
 Rev. J. B. Morris, M.A., Fellow of Exeter college, Oxford
 Rev. H. Formby, M.A., Vicar of Ruarddean, Gloucestershire
 Rev. George Burder, M.A.
 Rev. G. D. Ryder, Rector of Easton, Son of Bishop Ryder
 Rev. D. Lewis, M.A., Vice Principal, Jesus college, Oxford
 Rev. E. Horne, M.A., of Peter House, Cambridge
 Rev. E. Caswell, Brazennose college, Oxford
 Rev. J. Milner, B.A., Queen's college Oxford
 Rev. J. G. Wenham, B.A., Magdalen college, Oxford
 Rev. J. Plumer, Baliol college, Oxford
 Rev. H. Lauriston, M.A.,
 Rev. E. Ruahton, M.A.
 Rev. T. Rodwell, M.A.
 Rev. J. H. Laing, Queen's college, Cambridge
 Rev. E. H. Thompson, M.A., Curate of Ramsgate
 Rev. H. Wells, Curate of St. Martin's, Liverpool
 Rev. Howell Lloyd
 Rev. J. Simpson, Curate of Mitcham, Surrey
 Rev. C. Cox, B.A., Exeter college, Oxford
 Rev. H. H. Walker, B.A., Oriel college, Oxford
 Rev. F. Lowe, M.A., Cambridge
 Rev. A. G. Macmullen, M.A., Corp. Crist. college, Oxford
 Rev. J. Gordon, M.A., Curate of Christ Church, St. Pancras
 Rev. F. New, M.A., Fellow of St. John's college, Oxford
 Rev. R. Hornsby, M.A., Curate of St. Peter's Chichester
 Rdv. J. Reeves, Acton-Keyrus, Cirencester
 Rev. R. K. Sounce, Brazennose college, Oxford
 Rev. G. Algar, M.A., University college, Oxford

with such men, the more straight-forward seceders rise into comparative respect. *They* have not excited the contempt of every upright mind. *They* have not meanly lingered in the Protestant ranks, for the sake of the loaves and fishes. *They* have not assumed a false position to poison, to undermine, and to do that surreptitiously, which if performed openly would subject them to diocesan deprivation or censure. Their more noble forerunners in a manly way, acted conformably with their convictions, and though chargeable with a super-abundance of folly, they were exempt from duplicity.*

Rev. A. Chisol

Rev. J. A. Stewart, Rector of Vange, Essex

Rev. H. Bittleston, Musgrave chapel, Cavendish Square

Rev. W. Hanmer, Curate of Tidcombe, Tiverton

*It would be a happy and most desirable occurrence, if fifty or a hundred more of the Marian Converts,—the idolizers of Romanism, would assume their true colours, and fairly depart out of the Protestant fold. They are doing incalculably more harm in the church, than they could possibly do out of it. In looking at this list of Recusants, one thought naturally arises.—How is it that this conversion to the Papacy among the Reverends, is so uniformly limited to the lower grades? Why do not some of the lofty ones (holding their present sentiments and predilections) furnish to the world a test of their high principle, by voluntarily relinquishing for conscience' sake, their palaces and princely endowments? Why?—for good and substantial reasons, varying in number from four to twenty thousand!

An advertence will now be made to something of a more local nature. Symptoms of defection from the Protestant faith, (with grief it is remarked) have been manifested in Bristol; and which will here receive a passing notice, as it is not a first indication. From the reading-desk of a church in this city, the following notice was recently given.—‘*The prayers of the congregation are requested for a young man who is about to CONFESS for the first time.*’—At this flagrant popish manifestation, (whatever the cause, astonishment or acquiescence) not one of the congregation with true Protestant feeling at such an insult, arose and left the church! On a somewhat similar occasion, how different was the effect produced on the noble spirits of Exeter. When a novel attempt was made before them to introduce the ‘Babylonish garment,’ that enlightened

Yet however entitled to partial and modified commendation, the deserters to Romanism from the Church of England, have placed themselves in a pitiable condition. After all their sacrifices, and their anticipated visions of delight, they are regarded by their new Popish Brethren as black sheep; as men of half-cast; as intruders, advancing, uncalled, to divide the spoils of a poor community, which has more claimants already than it can well support, and now the little must be made less by an influx of hungry aspirants, who, the old papists affirm, never will make good catholics. They labour under one latent, and inveterate, and incurable bodily ailment! Their *digestion* is not sufficiently strong: a corporeal quality in which catholics excel! Yet these

assembly arose as one man, and by their inflexible resistance, drove the abhorred symbol from their sight. The motive which inspired this indignation reflected honour on their head and heart. It arose from no perception of an intrinsic quality in the vest, but from a knowledge that that vest, if unopposed, would become the pledge of, and prelude, to still greater popish enormities. If the Bristol Vicar thus attempted to introduce invidiously, the thin edge of the Catholic wedge into his church, as a 'feeler' to ascertain the practicability of other Romish inroads,—where is his *Diocesan*, to correct such monstrous proceedings? If the Incumbent should really be so far gone in his attachment to Catholicism, as courageously to brave all censure, and contravening obstacles, united with some hazard, in the furtherance of his favourite object, it would indeed afflict his earlier and best friends, and present a melancholy contrast to his truly christian Predecessor. His most strenuous efforts were exerted to stem the tide of Popery, then beginning to set in strong from Oxford, and which he justly feared would not only prove the bane of his country, but might beguile some of his own less stable members, for whose spiritual benefit he had so long and earnestly laboured. The catastrophe he dreaded has now arrived. And where, it may be asked, is the grand vigilant Overseer, the Bishop, to correct these morbid perversities? Does he countenance such offensive innovations on Protestant Order and Principles? Does he encourage by his apathy, or sanction by his connivance these irruptions of the enemy on his own Church? Men who are secretly, but strenuously forging the links with which they traitorously hope to connect Britain with Rome?—Would that we could say,—He discourages them!

intrepid converts must be sustained by recollecting, that suffering is the test of virtue.

In truth, the fraternal feeling which Puseyites are understood to entertain for their Brethren of Rome, is most ungratefully reciprocated ! After making such unmistakeable advances toward the Pontificate, it might have been thought that the approach would be welcomed ; the approximation hailed ; the look and voice become impatiently eager to encourage a closer affinity. On the contrary, the aspirants after confraternity have been most cruelly—indignantly, and scornfully repelled !—as will appear by the following extract ;—expressed in the usual delicate style of Popish courtesy.

“ Like those wandering Tribes, to whom each nation gives
“ a different name, and an indifferent character, the *Puseyites*
“ have hitherto existed, cut off from communion with man-
“ kind. No sect has been disposed to own them ; while the
“ Church, to which they are thought by ignorant people to be
“ next of kin, has recognised them as a sort of petty Free-
“ booters kidnapping what doctrines of her faith they took a
“ fancy to, and, as Gipsies do by other people’s children, dis-
“ figuring them to make them pass for their own. Thus
“ thrown by the waves of the Universal Church on the Bar-
“ barians, and by those Theological Savages driven back on
“ the Church, they are equally repudiated by Catholic Truth,
“ and Puritan Error ; too mean to be espoused by the one, and
“ not degraded enough to pander to the other.” *

Honour to whom honour is due. To the credit of Hibernian Trinity College, no Proselytes to the Popish delusions have issued from that classic bower. To the credit also of Ireland, none of her Clergy have swollen the ranks of the ‘ Man of Sin.’ Neither has Scotland contributed any of her Sons to the list of Recreants. A like honourable distinction is awarded to the English Nonconformists, including the Methodists. These all were too well informed to be beguiled by the sophisms of

* Catholic Standard.

Romanism. Astonishing as it may seem, the dereliction has been confined to scions, transplanted from the genial hot-beds of *Isis* and *Granta*. If rumour be reliable, a large accession to the worshippers of Mary are now drilling in the before-named Academic Groves, in preparation of a March of Rome ! Yet in those regions of defection, there are faithful standard-bearers for the Truth, on whom (with other auxiliaries) rest the hopes of England—for arresting a *Plague, greater, and more fatal than that of the Cholera !*

On the Writer sending some of the most condemnatory parts of the preceding comments on Romanism, in a printed form, to his friend, the *late* ! Mr. Wordsworth, he thus replied.

My dear old Friend.

* * * * *. I have perused it carefully, *and go the whole length with you in condemnation of Romanism*, and probably *much further*, by reason of my having passed at least three years of life in Countries where *Romanism* was the prevailing, or exclusive religion. And if we are to trust the declaration, ‘By their fruits ye shall know them,’ I have strong reasons, in the privilege I have mentioned, for passing a sterner condemnation upon leading parts of their Faith, and courses of their practice, than others who have never been eye-witnesses of the evils to which I allude. Your Publication is well timed. * * * * *

Ever most faithfully yours,

William Wordsworth.

THE CATHOLIC "RAMBLER."

THE Observations on the Papacy which appear in the preceding pages, have been made, not in the spirit of an Advocate, but from a confirmed belief that the question at issue involved the vital interests of humanity and national welfare, equally with the cause of Truth and Righteousness. But although the extent of these comments has far exceeded the original design, a few lines must be added in reference to a rather *extraordinary paper* which has recently appeared in a Periodical, called '*The Rambler*;' an accredited organ of the Catholics;—headed '*Maitland on the Reformation—The lawfulness of Persecution.*'

As a previous remark.—There is strange incongruity in Dr. M—, (Ex-Librarian at Lambeth Palace.) He professes to have '*No partiality for Romish Writers, their ERRORS, or HERESIES*;' yet his Work tends to depreciate the Reformation and its Agents, and indirectly to promote the Catholic cause. Dr. M. here accuses Papists of *Error* and *Heresy*. Why deal with these Perverters of Christian Truth in so vague and general a way? If, before he advanced the imputation, he believed, as he must have done, that they were obnoxious to the charge of Error and Heresy why refrain from sustaining so serious an allegation by specific examples, and the conclusive arguments in which his convictions originated? It, appears ungenerous to accuse of so grave a charge, and not to justify the accusation. Had he so spoken out, and fearlessly taken the lion by the beard, it would (most joyfully!) have superseded these pages, and have exhibited a conduct far more accordant with the character of a consistent Protestant Divine, than by decrying the Reformation,—the source of

inestimable blessings ; which has so happily filled our *Throne*, and conferred on England all her unrivalled preeminence.

An opinion has been expressed by the Writer, amounting to a conviction, that if (it being allowed to illustrate truth by impossibilities) if *Poper*y should once more obtain an ascendancy in England, the spirit of *Persecution* would revive, with all its accompanying arguments, of *Jails*, *Racks*, and *Fagots* ! —Catholic Priests, with their present mild demeanour, might seem to discourage such apprehensions, but the truth sometimes emerges from under a veil. Occasionally a *Romanist* appears, endued with an extra portion of candour, who, to his credit, stands out conspicuously from among his compeers ; rejecting concealment, and, in a manly way, who avows his objects and expectations. Of this creditable number is the Writer in the '*Rambler*.'

In a dissertation on Dr. Maitland's work, the Writer in question, boldly throws off the mask, and gives publicity to doctrines, which his more cautious Brethren equally entertain, but, from policy, studiously conceal. He at once, without disguise, courageously declares his concurrence in the *lawfulness*, and even *necessity of persecution*, under one restriction,— '*When the Church judges it right*'. Speaking of our *Bloody Queen Mary*, with all her sanguinary deeds, he says ; 'The Protestants left her no alternative, but to *put them down* by rigour and *blood-shed*.' Of 'The noble army of martyrs,' who submitted to the *Stake*, in her reign, rather than recant and profess themselves Papists, he thus concurs with Dr. M.—'The martyrs under Queen Mary very often deserved *the fate they got*.' It is always painful to retract a favourable opinion, once expressed, but independently of the *vulgarity of language*, the sentiment here recorded implies a cold-blooded feeling which could have proceeded from none but a Papist, possessing a mind—inveterately imbued with his inhuman creed.

'Bishop Bonner' (it is rather paradoxically affirmed) 'was a *good kind-hearted Christian*, much more desirous of saving

men's souls, than of burning their bodies'(!) so that only Three hundred Protestant men and women were *burnt alive*, in the short and lenient reign of *Mary*, and under the direction and auspices of those two good kind-hearted Bishops, *Bonner* and *Gardiner*! The '*Rambler*,' says 'Bonner shed blood, *because*,' [mark, Reader, the logical deduction] '*because* 'he was compelled by the commands of his own conscience!' (a kind of conscience, no doubt, common to all Papists!) 'and 'partly by the Lay [Priestly] authorities of the times.' The '*Rambler*' further declares, in a significant sentence,—Catholic Governments looked to 'Ecclesiastical Judges,' [In every conceivable sense, the worst and most bitter-minded judges on the face of the earth!] 'to decide what was, or was not *Heresy*, and then, took on themselves 'to *imprison*!—*fine*!—*torture*!—*burn*!—or, *hang*!—the convicted *Heretics*,' not according to equitable law, but '*according to their own good pleasure*!' The same writer makes a nice distinction, worthy of notice, respecting the severities, (in some condemnable instances) exercised by *Protestants*, in retaliation, on *Papists*. He says. 'A double 'share of blame is to be charged on Protestants for hanging, ' &c. as *they* have not an *Infallible Guide* to direct *them*!' He proceeds to say, confirming the well-known Catholic sentence, pronounced on all who are out of the Papal Church,—'*They* do not pretend to say [as we do] that none 'can be saved but those who agree in their views!'

The '*Rambler*' further declares. 'It is a delusion to suppose that piety and devotion had any thing to do with the 'Martyrdoms of a *vast number* of the persons who were put 'to death (*burnt*) under *Mary*. It is mere *twaddle* and *cant* 'to call them Martyrs at all. They were no more Martyrs 'than Thistlewood.—*They were seditious scoundrels*!'—In the midst of this exculpatory declaration, the truth manifests itself, where the same Writer incidentally states of Bonner, 'He *did* procure a great number of *Recantations*:'—words, clearly implying, that it was *Religion*, and not *Politics* for which they suffered. This inference is additionally confirmed

by the following declaration, indicating that men were condemned, not because they were seditious, but because they were Protestants. These are the writer's words. 'It was impossible to view the *unconvinced* Protestant, in any other light than that of a *preacher of sedition*.'

If England can look back on any one class of her children with honest pride, as having displayed, in perilous times, enlarged views, true magnanimity, and inflexible principle; rejecting every compromise with conscience, and by perseverance, and patient endurance, wresting from reluctant powers, the civil and religious liberties we now enjoy, it is to her magnanimous *Puritans*, of whom the *Martyrs*, in Mary's reign, were the honoured Precursors. Yet this Catholic Writer cannot allow the latter characters, in any sense, to have been 'Christian men.' No. They were 'Seditious scoundrels!'—so that he sneeringly denominates them, 'Gospellers,' and Pharisaically contemns them as '*Bible Christians*!' (a charge which will never be brought against *Papists*!) This writer discovers a rare talent for caustic epithets.—The man who shrinks from this slight species of *persecution*—the infliction of opprobrious names, will make but a *poor Martyr*, in the season, so near at hand, when *Romanism* is to be predominant!

This new advocate for *fire* and *fagot*, appears to entertain peculiar enmity to the noble spirits whose indomitable efforts, at the period of the Reformation, rescued our country from the grinding tyranny of *Rome*. This is natural!—but their fame stands on too lofty a pinnacle to be reached by the puny darts of their assailants!—even by men carrying the weight of *Maitland* and the *Rambler*! The same vehement enmity blackens the character of the immortal Luther, whom the '*Rambler*' tells us, 'No English writer ever equalled for his horrible excesses and indecencies.' But vituperation is invariably applied to all who have ever disparaged *Rome*, and the same round of reproachful language which has been so lavishly heaped on *Luther*, *Fox*, *Burnett* and other truth-tell-

ing historians, must be *expected* with monotonous regularity, by all other expositors of *Papal enormities*.

But the feature in the '*Rambler*' which alone would have received a notice in this place arises from his daring defence of *religious persecution*. A notion has prevailed with many, that the reign of persecution was passed, as being inconsistent with the 'Spirit of the age.' It could not be denied, that, in former times, the Papists had tormented and slaughtered their tens of thousands, for not thinking on all religious subjects exactly as they thought, yet, *that period*, it was thought, had vanished. The world had renounced its infantine maxims, and advanced into the region of *sense*.— Catholics were now ashamed of their Ancestors, and readily conceded the same latitude to the consciences of others which they so earnestly ~~claimed~~ claimed for themselves.—A captivating theory this! but insubstantial as the morning dream.

The indestructible *heaven* of *Persecution* expands and luxuriates in the *Popish Priests'* hearts, where it rankles,— unneutralized by time, and unsatiated by repletion. In confirmation of a sentiment so ratified by all experience, a fresh Champion for persecution has started forward in the Catholic Ranks, fresh and zealous as ever for the *Rack* and the *Stake*! —He thus propounds his horrible dogma.—'FOR OURSELVES' (speaking for the whole body of Catholic Priests) 'WE ARE PREPARED TO MAINTAIN, THAT IT IS NO MORE MORALLY WRONG TO PUT A MAN TO DEATH FOR HERESY THAN FOR MURDER!'

From this Romish and *diabolical* sentiment! (so extreme a case requires proportionately emphatic language) it results, that it is no more morally wrong, in the sight of a *Papist*, to torture and burn *Protestants* on account of their religion, than it is in a Civil Government to hang a *murderer*!—The absurdities and complicated superstitions of Romanists (if their disastrous effects were, or could be forgotten) might be smiled at, and endured, but their *intolerance*, their contempt of *mortal suffering*, with their tiger-like *appetite for blood*;—

waging, as they do, and ever have done, an exterminating war on all who in any degree oppose, or question, their *Anti-christian doctrines and practices* :—this rouses, or ought to rouse, a confederacy against them of all who have one drop of human blood flowing in their veins ! It isolates such infuriated spirits from the family of man, and stamps on the *Papacy*—a Brand, pronouncing it the deadly foe of all which is noble in the sympathies of our common nature !

Can the thought be repressed ;—What havoc would this *Lupus*, and his ‘ *Pack*,’ now make in the *Fold of Christ*, if only endued with *Power* ! Such men, if their competence were equal to their desires, would desolate the world,—where an opinion was entertained different from his own !—stimulated by the old plea, of serving ‘ *God and the Church* !’ Yet notwithstanding the *Romanists*’ sanguinary career, exceeding in extent and character, any example presented by the darkest Heathen Annals ; and although a feeling of utter abhorrence is entertained by the Writer, of the Papal System, this aversion extends not to its professors, *as men*, to whom he would render any office of service, or of kindness, heretical as he still deems them ; nor would any Protestant, who respected his principles, hurt one hair of a Catholic’s head from dislike of his religion. He might be remonstrated with for his follies and crimes, as in these pages, and be driven out of the field by solid argument, but *there* hostility would cease. The weapon of *coercion*, whether exercised in tormenting the body, or fettering the mind, must be wielded alone by *Catholics*. With all this forbearance, those who know Romanists, and the inveteracy of their *Priests*, would as readily entrust a *Lamb* with a *Hyæna*, as confer on them authority ; or, especially, absolute sway ; assured that such confidence would as inevitably lead to *bonds and blood*, as thunder succeeds the lightning ! It is the more noticeable, as these furious assaults on alleged *Heretics* proceed from men who are *themselves*, according to the *Christian standard*, the *greatest of Heretics* ; being innovators, and

violators, on the grandest scale; and who, whilst they are distinguished for all that is hostile to True Religion, feel toward the Rejecters of *their* Errors and Heresies, the most malign and implacable wrath. What bold calculator shall ascertain the number of direct and palpable *murders*, perpetrated by *Papists* during the last five hundred years! Nor can it be doubted that the passion for torture and death is as keen *at this moment* as it ever was: but the *Priests* are restrained *alone* by the *more humane* Civil Powers!

The '*Rambler*' further discloses his charitable sentiments, *so confirmatory of the views here taken* of Papistic violence. He says, 'Persecution for religious opinions is not only 'permissible, but highly advisable and *necessary*!' Again he affirms, 'Such persecutions are neither forbidden by the laws 'of God 'or man!' And, again, 'Instances do incessantly 'occur, in which persecution, in some form or other, is both 'wise, merciful, necessary, and Christian!'

Do not these declarations of the Catholic '*Rambler*,' furnish the amplest confirmation, of the still lurking, deep-rooted, blood-thirsty propensities, indigenous to the *Papists'* heart?—men who are so deluged in superstition, as well as alienated from all social fellow-feeling, and in love with severity, as to require only their ancient ascendancy—the *upper hand*—to shed once more, remorselessly, their torrents of Protestant blood! This charge is not directed against the Catholic *Laitie*, but their *Priests*, in whose breasts appear to be concentrated all the gall and merciless austerities of man's untamed nature. Think, *Englishmen*! a Catholic, in the middle of the 19th century, and on *Albion's soil*, in the hope of speedily exterminating the last vestige of the hated *Reformation*; precedes the expected catastrophe by boldly advocating '*religious persecution*!'—the virtues of *fire* and *fagot*!—advancing at the same time the fearful sentiment, 'That it is no more morally wrong to put a man to death for *Heresy*, than for *Murder*!' This *fiery* Papist with all

the ardour of his fraternity, invokes persecution, and gravely affirms it to be—‘ wise ! merciful ! necessary ! and *Christian* !’ If, within the verge of possibility, how would this zealot, and his co-judicators, hale, once more, men and women *Heretics* before the Tribunal of a *Bench of Romish Priests* ; iron in every countenance, and vengeance in every eye, and heart ! Here Protestants ! you read your doom ! Times and seasons vary, but intolerance, and thirst of blood, ever have been, and ever will be—the inalienable motive and moving-power of the Catholic Church ! Society can never be secured from the furor of Priests, but when they are, comparatively, chained like wild beasts.

Will it always be thus ? Shall the greatest, and most inveterate of Heretics, perpetually falsify the religion of the Bible, and substitute for the Gospel, the refuse of Heathenism ?—deceiving the world with shows, and withholding from men the Bread of Life ! For the joy of our race, deliverance is *rapidly advancing*. There is an unwonted analytical spirit rising in the human mind, which probes, and pursues all subjects into their darkest retreats. Such severe ordeals alarm not *Truth*, which covets inspection, and shines the brighter for scrutiny ; but *Error* trembles at the minute research ; and *the doom of Romanism hastens fast* ! The *Mass* which has beguiled so many generations, with the whole *system* from which it emanates, will be convicted of being founded on the *grossest deception*, and of resting for its support on the most *abject credulity* ; equally divided between Priests and People. Attempts may be made by the artful and interested to check inquiry ;—to allow the old wheels still to pursue their beaten track, but the season of forbearance has passed, and Fallacy has lost her power to charm.

An indignant feeling has arisen, natural to men breaking through the accumulated obstructions so long thrown in the way of all penetrating and enlarged thought, by Error and Priestcraft. From these considerations it may be pre-

dicted, that the downfall of the *Papacy* will be as rapid as was its rise. Springing up as it did, and nourished as it was, in the dark ages, through the morbid influences of superstition, avarice, and lust of power, and deriving none other than a wholly fallacious support from *Scripture*, the justly excited storm of human indignation, now rising, with the awakened intellects of man, will, *ere long*, sweep the *baseless fabric* precipitously to the earth,—amid the exultant shout of the liberated—‘*Babylon the Great—is fallen!—is fallen!*’

But the reader will now be presented with a more enlivening theme. Our friend the Catholic, with that easy transition from ‘grave to gay’ which policy dictates, at this moment varies his tactics. He has established his postulate, and proved to *his own* entire satisfaction, that *persecution* is a real good, and necessary thing—that is, not towards *Papists*, but against *Protestants*. And now he abruptly *varies his notes*, and sweeps with a master’s hand the tender strings of *mammon*. Strange as it may appear, he has renounced all solitudes, but how to improve (will it be believed) the ‘*Finances of the Country*.’ He has promulgated an important suggestion, even to the ‘*Chancellor of the Exchequer*,’ pointing out (rather hypothetically) the way in which the ‘*National Coffers*’ might be replenished to an indefinite extent; in truth relieved from all embarrassment. This prodigious advantage is combined with a *second* benefit, last, not least—dependent upon it; being no other than an expedient, whereby the whole population of England and Scotland might be turned round from *Protestant delusion*, to the *true worship of Mary!* and that, as easily as a mariner at the helm turns his skiff! The *simplicity* with which so grand an effect is to be produced is really admirable! This wholesale conversion will be accomplished by a very inartificial process—merely—by a *vote in the Lower House of Parliament*; that is, by the concurrent voice of ‘*Tories, Whigs, and Radicals*.’ The thought is so ingenious, and the scheme so feasible, that it must immediately attract the notice of

Sir Charles Wood, who will deem it a rather opportune discovery, as, owing to some cross circumstances, the *Financial Organ*, at this particular juncture, is somewhat out of tune. In verity, this prodigious benefit to the Exchequer and the Nation, will depend on, and be produced by—so slight an occurrence, as the merely *bringing in the Popish Religion*, in substitution of *Protestantism*, and so *quietly* making it the *Statute Law of the Land*! If the arguments should appear to the *Premier*, as cogent as they do to the *Originator*, *Lord John* would have nothing to do but to send for the *Pope*, (who happens to be rather disengaged, just at this moment, and looking out for a comfortable domicile) and then to march with *His Holiness* through London, not decked in the habiliments of a *livery servant*, but attired in his own emblem of universal dominion, the imposing *Triple Crown*. There can be no rational question, but that the *Man of Sin's* reception, or, otherwise, the *Sovereign Pontiff's*, would be both *warm* and *long to be remembered*. But this honest Catholic and friend of the Exchequer shall speak for himself.

‘If the House of Commons,’ [Her Majesty the Queen ‘being a cipher, and the House of Lords an assemblage of ‘nobodies!]] ‘If the House of Commons believed that the ‘taxes would be better paid, and the gaols emptied, by *inducing* [compelling] all Englishmen to go to *Confession* to a ‘Catholic Priest, three or four times a year, [how slight is the ‘difference between *Popery* and *Protestantism*] what conceivable reason is there to forbid their taking *such steps* for the ‘promotion of the *Catholic religion*, as might be in their ‘power?’

To feel further the pulse of the nation, the same able *Financier*, thus additionally propounds his lucid and incomparable monetary scheme; (for the subject is too suggestive of good things to be lightly abandoned.) He says, ‘If the ‘nation could be set free from some millions of taxation, now ‘expended in prisons, courts of law, (Police and Military) by ‘*the propagation of the Catholic religion*, and (N.B.) ‘*the*

‘forcible silencing of the *Preachers of Protestantism*, can any man be so simple as to believe that *Parliament* would hesitate to clap the *Rev. Hugh M’Neile* into *Gaol*, and to bind over *Sir Robert Inglis* to keep the peace against the *Pope*.’ The acute logician goes on to say, ‘In very truth, we should be sorry to change places with *anti-Popish orators*, were the *TORIES*, *WHIGS*, and *RADICALS* of the House of Commons once convinced, [as we are] that the *Catholics* are better subjects than *Protestants*, and that a man who goes to *Confession* is less likely to be a *swindler* than one who boasts of being a *Bible Christian*, and calls the *Pope*, *Antichrist*!’

This noble exponent and magnifier of the *Papacy*, feels his zeal and his prospects now immeasurably expanding. In the zest and rapture of anticipation he thus pursues his lucubrations. ‘Whatever might be the convictions of our Law-givers *themselves*,’ (this savours rather of the *Jesuit*) ‘Could they once see that the peace of society, the happiness of families, and the *Treasures of the National Exchequer* would be materially benefited by the cessation, (how mild the term!) ‘of all the *anti-Popish* declamations, now so rife amongst us, we should be sorry to expend a solitary sixpence in insuring the *liberty of speech* which would be granted to *Sir Peter Laurie*, and other notorious *Apostles of Protestantism*, from our very liberal, and very tolerant Government. We do not think that the [New Papal] Government would proceed to burn Sir Peter, (qy.) or to whip Sir Peter, (qy.) or to hang Sir Peter, (qy.) but we have no doubt that they would take as *effective* measures for making Sir Peter hold his tongue, as they have taken for quieting the unfortunate Smith O’Brien, and for putting an end to the demonstrations of the belligerent Cuffey.’

So sound and cool-headed a *Romanist*, and one so just in his discrimination, might reasonably be expected to feel a little extra partiality for his own *confraternity*, so that he very pardonably thus expresses his convictions. ‘If I have any pecuniary dealings with a *Catholic* I am more confident

‘that he will not try to cheat me, than if he were a *Protestant*,’ (to be sure.) With admirable *simplicity* the good Catholic continues his predilections and aversions. ‘I am much more afraid of being *swindled* by an *Evangelical*, than by a *Puseyite*, I would rather make a bargain with a *Socinian*, than with a *Baptist*, and would let my furnished house to a *Wesleyan*, rather than to an *Independent*. And why? Because I well know that the morality of all these sects does practically vary according to their theological belief; and that an *Anglican* who believes that good works are necessary to salvation, is much less likely to be a *rogue*, than a *Lutheran*, who thinks he is justified by faith, without any good works at all.’ (This sounds very much like the *Rambler’s* own *Twaddle*.)

It is observable that Papists call Protestants, *Heretics*; and that Protestants denominate Papists, *Heretics*. But there are two essential points of difference between them. *First*, Protestants never *rack* and *burn* those whom *they* regard as Heretics; and *secondly*—Papists charge Protestants with *Heresy*, because they differ from *them*; but Protestants accuse Papists of *Heresy*, because they differ from the *Bible*.

The honest Catholic now suggests for the consolation of *Protestant Heretics*, that they may allay their terrors, arising from the near and universal establishment, in England, of *Auricular Confession*, and consequently of *Popery*. He assures them, they may dismiss their fears, for that they will simply be restrained, and ‘*chastised*.’ The whole world knows the profundity of meaning comprised in that little Romish word, ‘*chastised*,’ ranging from a thumb-screw to a fagot-pile! To remove the Protestants’ trepidation, however, he assures them, on Catholic honour, that they will not be *racked*, not *tortured*, not *flogged*, not *burnt*. But this soother of the timid shall again speak for himself.

‘Should the British parliament do homage to the social advantages to be derived from the practice of *Auricular Confession*—the *Lauries*, the *Inglises*, the *Plumptrees*, and the

‘*Tyrrells*, who may still *survive*,’ (the writer begins to feel a crick in his own neck !) ‘need fear no *rack*, or *torture* ; no *flogging* or *fagots*. They will be *chastised* and *restrained* ‘with the same courteous moderation we now show in feeding ‘the condemned *felon* with better food than the toiling ‘peasant.’

(A pause is here made to remonstrate with the ‘*Rambler*’ on the unwarrantable liberty he takes with the names of Public Men ; those, especially, who have shown their wisdom, and discovered their virtue, by bearing a decided testimony against the corruptions of *Popery*. The individuals on whom he wreaks his displeasure are sustained not only by the goodness of their cause, but, from knowing that however intense the ‘*Rambler*’s anger may be, and vindictive the feelings of Papists, generally, against those whom they call ‘*The Apostles of Protestantism*,’ their wrath (till the *New Era* arrives) cannot extend beyond *words* ! It might have been thought that there was sufficient scope in *general remark*, without the *Rambler* descending to *gross personalities*—but to advert to the preceding spirit-stirring *threats*.)

These are rather appalling omens for *refractory Protestants*. But however portentous to *them*, genial skies and exhilarating prospects are illimitably opening on *Papists*. They may bewail that ‘some of their nobility and wealthy gentry, are Catholics in name, more than in reality.’ But these are specks on the Sun. The ‘*Rambler*,’ in his exordium, exultingly exclaims (with something of the *Rhythm* and *fire*, of the *Ode*.—But the subject necessarily illicitly inspired !) He thus proceeds.—‘A hopeful scene awaits our eye ! One of ‘the greatest Nations of the World is passing through a ‘period of transition,’ [from Protestantism into Popery !] ‘in ‘which an opportunity is given to *the Church*, to come forward, ‘and make that Nation *her own* ;—such as she has never ‘known since her sufferings began.’ [with the *Anathematized Reformation* !] ‘What a sight is this !’ (he ejaculates) ‘for the ‘enlightened Catholic mind !’

It being thus a settled point, that the Protestant *Reign* is speedily to terminate, and the Popish *Dynasty* arise, nothing can be more natural than—that the *New Power*, emerging from obscurity into precedence, and experiencing the accomplishment of all its desires, by, a *vote of Parliament*! should cast a prospective glance at the momentous, and cheering consequences.—The brave Catholic, who (in fancy has already clapped ‘*Sir Peter*, and *Sir Robert*’ safe in *gaol*, together with sundry other sturdy Recusants, now formally pronounces the programme of the opening Drama. The deeply-revolving Projector, thus meditates on coming events, so long foreshadowed. He says,—‘Should any one Creed, [the *Romish* for instance] ‘again succeed in winning the affections of the great heart of ‘the nation, *we* hold it *ridiculous* to suppose that Parliament’ (Tories, Whigs, and Radicals) ‘would hesitate to discourage,’ (what a gentle, yet comprehensive word!) ‘all opposition to ‘that creed.’—[as in the glorious days of her, whose death all Papists so feelingly deplore!—that of the *Good Queen Mary*!]

This Writer in the ‘*Rambler*,’ may be an ordinary *Romish* Priest, (as previously suggested) but he cannot be a *Jesuit* Priest. There is a plain-speaking about him, an open frankness;—so clear a revelation of the interior man, without subterfuge or evasion, that he not only deserves, but demands unqualified admiration! The *Jesuit* would have sweetened the poison;—have concealed the dagger;—have smiled—till the moment preceding—vengeance! If *any thing* could reconcile the *Writer* to *Romish Priests*, it would be the ingenuous spirit which the ‘*Rambler*’ here displays, by tracing, in so frank and explicit a way, all the happy effects that will attend on the approaching *dislocation of the whole Protestant System*.—He, and his zealous coadjutors, have fairly warned the *Lawn Sleeves* of England (inclusive of all the forms of *Protestantism*) that they are *Interlopers*, and on a par with *Infidels*;—not excluding the half-and-half, hybrid, non-descript, slippery, neither-hot-nor-cold-men, called, *Puseyites*

‘The whole of them,’ sound Catholics declare, ‘*must be put down.*’

The uninitiated will feel *surprise* at the following *Catholic assumptions*, whilst, to others, it will afford *amusement*. ‘The tenure should not be forgotten, on which so many of the *‘Squirearchy and Great Lords of the Isle hold ‘Our Ancient Church Lands.’* These Lands were never transferred by us, nor alienated. They were wrested from us, by main force, and, in equity, ought to revert to the original possessors, or their heirs, of whom we Catholics are their undoubted representatives. The *Parliament*, so soon we hope to unite in our favour, will take, we are sure, especial care of our *‘Sequestered Estates.* (as for dissatisfied *Purchasers*, they may grumble, but they should take care, and not buy *stolen goods.*) These Lands being thus restored to *us*, their true owners, as a matter of course, will be accompanied with the *‘Old Churches, and Cathedrals,* built with *our money.* As for the *New parsimonious Churches,—a straw for them!—* Although they might serve for *Catholic Chapels of Ease.—* So that, what with these accessions, and the numerous *gatherings from Endowments, and refundings from the various Deans and Chapters, and other Ecclesiastical, and Corporate Bodies, accompanied with close sifting, after so much lax management,* The whole of this will make up a good round amount of choice *Prizes* for our *New Hierarchy.* To all this must be added the grandest item of all; the *‘Tithes!* furnishing, in the aggregate, a princely provision for our various *Ecclesiastical Orders.—*To recur once more to so absorbing and vital a subject as this recovery of our rightful *‘Possessions.—*No one can believe it possible that our friends, the *‘Tories, Whigs, and Radicals,’* after doing so much for us, and in the possession of such *irresistible influence,* swaying the destinies of the nation, will treacherously desert their confiding *Protegès;* especially when they have so successfully exerted their noble powers—to pull down *Protestantism,* and build up *Popery.* No! No! We rest quite assured that

‘they will not withhold from us our *Tithes* and *Church Lands*. The mere *thought* is a reflection on human nature!—After thus obtaining, to the full, our *just rights*, fresh sun-beams break in upon us. We have good hopes that some three or four of the *Right Reverends*, with a little *trimming*, might be converted into good *Roman Catholic Bishops*; at least, so *we* think, and so his *Holiness* thinks; but, in that case, they must send their *wives* packing, or they will never be received at *Rome*. Furthermore, if we could introduce two or three of our own *enlightened ones*, and could get rid of two or three of the *intractables*, we should not entirely despair of the *Universities*! We consider, also, two or three on the Bench as in a hopeful state. At any rate, with such all-powerful friends as the ‘*Tories, Whigs, and Radicals*,’ we are determined to have our own! *All—or—None!*

But if cheering prospects animate Papists, Protestants are not destitute of *their* consolations. Benefits, many and great (as a counterpoise for their losses) will not be wanting. By the new order of things, when *Protestantism* is suppressed, and *Popery* established, society will be improved, incalculably. Among other advantages, our favoured Land, (the universal refuge of the distressed) will enjoy, the distinguished privilege of hailing, as *Residentiaries*, a whole *host of Jesuits*, in whose favour is heard the voice of *universal praise*! These *Incomparables* have hitherto approached our happy shore, in cautious *defile* and with hesitating steps; their countenances long, and their hearts faint. Now, however, in the country’s improved condition, (so soon as it shall arrive) they will advance amongst us, blithe as the morning lark—bold as the king of beasts; and if not so numerous, quite as beneficial, as a sun-hiding flight of locusts! It is true clouds have sometimes overcast their horizon. From certain ungrateful quarters they have experienced rough language, and endured rather harsh receptions, but *halcyon days* have arrived, (*or are coming*) when—not the antecedent, grisly, ‘lean-kine; but sleek, portly, well-favoured Jesuits, revived to new life

will look round on renovated Old England, and exultingly proclaim the wide circumference, *their own sweet patrimony*,—long delayed, but gained at last! and, where, as sub-lords of the soil, they will permanently seat themselves, and flourish like black game on the Caledonian Moors.

Protestants are here candidly instructed in the mighty change about to occur. In no doubtful language they are taught that the little will soon become the great!—through the *one vote of Parliament*—in itself constituting the Three Estates of the Empire; not the old-fashioned nomenclature of ‘*Queen, Lords, and Commons*,’ but ‘*Tories, Whigs, and Radicals*!’ Intelligible notices are given, at the same time, of the vast amount of *penalties* to be levelled on the *brawlers* against the Papacy when *the tables are turned*.

Although it may be questioned by some, with the greatest seriousness it is affirmed—the whole *Protestant community* are placed under obligation to the ‘*Rambler*’ for the clear exposition he has given, of the hopes and efforts now so confidently entertained and sedulously pursued, to bring back *England*, (and also our dear *Scotch Brethren*) to the *silken bands of Rome*. Other Papists are equally zealous, and sanguine, as well as incessantly projecting their schemes and machinations, in order to effect so ‘devout a consummation,’ but they are *moles*, working in the dark, and breathing their designs only in whispers to fellow-*conspirators*; but here is an *honest Catholic* who accuses *Sir Peter*, and *Sir Robert*, and the rest of the *doomed ones*, boldly, to their face! He forewarns *them*, and all their *heretical fraternity*, that they have a fearful array of judgments out against them!—their accusers—the too-long depressed Romanists, but who are speedily to become their *judges*, and the triumphant possessors of their long-estranged inheritance! It appears a crime little less than sacrilege to interfere with the hilarities and joyous reveries of this *Exchequer Friend* and *Transcendental Financier*, who, in his elysian day-dreams alternates, *in fancy*, between vindictive visitations, and Catholic sway; yet he must pardon one gentle intimation.

Before the learned members for Oxford University, and East Kent; and the well-judging Essex Baronet; and the eloquent Divine; and the stout-hearted City Knight; and the other innumerable champions of Protestantism, (lay and cleric) shall be '*silenced,*' or '*scourged,*' or '*burnt,*' or '*hanged,*' for their attachment to liberty of conscience;—love of the Bible;—hatred of persecution;—and adherence to the Reformed Faith.—*Before* the religion, for which their fathers fought and bled, shall be subverted by an army of Heretical and Intolerant Priests;—*before* the *Host* shall be paraded through Cheapside, or a *Cardinal* preach in Saint Paul's;—or *Mass* be performed in the Abbey;—*before* our light and freedom shall be exchanged for Catholic superstition and bondage!—*before* the love of Protestantism shall be extinguished in the honest English heart, or the crimes of Popery be forgotten!—*Chillingworth* be discarded, or *Bellarmin* adored;—*before* British statesmen and senators shall prove traitors to their country, and their God!—*before* our *gracious Queen Victoria*, and her *Illustrious Successors*, shall violate their *Coronation Oath*, and, like the *Second James*, be smitten with *blindness*;—England—the Flower of Nations! shall have relapsed into barbarism; and the Sun have ceased to shine!

JOSEPH COTTLE.

Firfield, near Bristol,
January, 1st, 1850.

A L F R E D:

B O O K I.

SCENE—DENMARK.

ARGUMENT.

IVAR, the evening before he departs from Denmark with new forces to attack England, consults the Oracle.—Kills a Mariner.—How punished by the illusions of the Witch.—Swears never to take away the life of any unarmed person in the Island to which he is going.—Departs for Britain.

PREPARED once more to seek the Saxon land,
Within his father's halls, Ivar now sits,
Musing on future spoils. Around him throng
His wrathful sisters, rousing up his heart
To vengeance 'gainst the race who slew their sire.¹ 5
At Regner's name, Ivar uprose, his eye
Beam'd fearful indignation, when he cried,

"Death to our foes! My spirit thirsts to see
'The blood of Saxons flowing, ocean like;
'The victims of my fury. Lord of war! 10
'Odin,² immortal chief! thy voice I hear,
'And like thee, forth I go, to scorn the prayers,
'And scatter wide the bones, and heap the skulls
'Of vanquish'd enemies. Death! view in me

B

- 'Thy proudest son, ere long ordain'd to swell 15
 'Slaughter's rank pile, and for the ravenous wolves
 'Provide new banquets. By the rapturous hope
 'Of one day joining the celestial throng,
 'Amid Valhalla,³ hearing on all sides,
 'From each brave warrior, gratulations loud ; 20
 'By that eternal hope, here do I swear
 'Mercy to scorn. Let Saxon foes display
 'The pitying heart, and hesitate to strike
 'The vanquished victim.⁴ Them no thoughts inspire
 'Of future recompence, when Odin's voice 25
 'Through every world shall sound, whilst all the ghosts
 'Of untold ages crowd around the thrones
 'Of valiant spirits : when the gods shall cry,
 'Let him who slew the most approach and join
 'Our blissful mansions, at that glorious hour, 30
 'Ivar with pride shall claim the heritage
 'Reserved for valour. On the Saxons' head
 'Curses for ever light ! Be their land veil'd
 'In everlasting darkness ! May their hearts,
 'While unconsumed, Muspelsheim's⁵ fires o'erwhelm ! 35
 'Soon shall this sword, to the infernal worlds,
 'Send such an army that all Neflheim's⁶ sons
 'Shall rise in triumph ; clap their wither'd hands,
 'And, (gazing on their brethren,) shout my praise,—
 'The sworn avenger of his father's wrongs. 40
 'I haste to seek the conflict.'
- 'Wilt thou dare,
- 'Thus from our shores to launch,' Thorilda⁷ cried,
 'Ere thou, with homage due, the Sorceress⁸ seek,
 'That under the black mountain rests her head, 45
 'To whom all times are known ? Raise not the sword
 'And rashly dare the combat, till thou first
 'Consult the Oracle.⁹ Proud Hadrin once
 'Disdain'd the words of Othin, when he said,
 'Curetur,¹⁰ meet not, tyrant as he is, 50

‘Or thou shalt know captivity. The king
 ‘Bewail’d his rashness. Be thou wise, and learn
 ‘From his disaster how to hold the power
 ‘Of spells and divination.’ Thus the prince.

‘Far other thoughts, Thorilda, have I learn’d 55
 ‘From her who bore me, ¹¹ than the impious wish
 ‘To scorn the Gods immortal, who to some
 ‘Have given prophetic wisdom. Well I know
 ‘Where divination dwells,—o’er yonder surge,
 ‘Out mid the lonely deep. On the next morn 60
 ‘I sail for Britain. Dreary now the hour :
 ‘The night is dark ; and chilling blows the wind
 ‘O’er the vex’d ocean ; yet, a heart I boast
 ‘That never stoop’d to fear ; a mailed heart,
 ‘Invincible, and forth I go, e’en now, 65
 ‘To learn my fortunes.’ Instant he arose
 And mid applauding voices, to the beach
 Pursued his perilous and lonely way.

Thick darkness veil’d the sky, the tempest howl’d.
 As o’er the shore he strode, he saw a man,— 70
 A mariner. ‘Well met,’ the warrior cried,
 ‘Launch out thy bark, for I am bound to find
 ‘The Sorceress’ habitation. Dost thou know
 ‘Her secret dwelling?’ ‘Well I know the spot—
 ‘Her secret dwelling,’ spake the mariner : 75
 ‘But, hark ! the winds are rising ; see the waves
 ‘Heaving their monstrous heads. At such an hour
 ‘’Twere death to venture.’ Cried the indignant Chief,
 ‘Thou dastard spirit, know, thy prince is nigh !
 ‘Ivar demands thy service. Launch thy bark.’ 80
 The man replied. ‘I, by the spell, ¹² am bound,
 ‘No choice is mine. I must deny thy will,
 ‘And, patient, tread this shore.’ ‘Deny thy prince,’
 Ivar enraged exclaim’d, when, to his heart

Wrathful, he plunged his sword ! The mariner 85
 Fell lifeless, while the prince pursued his course.
 Not long he stray'd ere to another man—
 A mariner he came, who pondering stood :
 ' Well met,' cried Ivar. ' I am bound to find
 ' The Sorceress' habitation : launch thy bark.' 90
 The mariner in silence launch'd his bark,
 And o'er the raging billows urged his way.

Now darker grew the crowded atmosphere ;
 There was no moon on high, and not a star
 Peep'd through the ebon canopy : the blast 95
 Rang loud, and now, with roar more terrible,
 Swept o'er the foaming waves.

' But dost thou know,
 ' In this tempestuous hour, the certain course ?'
 Said Ivar, as the spray dash'd o'er his face. 100
 Solemn the helmsman cry'd—' I know the course.'
 More furious howl'd the storm, and in the air,
 So black and pitchy, forms appear'd to float,
 More black, and of terrific character.
 ' But dost thou know the *way* ?' with falt'ring voice, 105
 Again he ask'd him. Slow the boatman spake,
 ' I know the way.' A moment's calm prevail'd :
 The waves, like heaving mountains, held their heads
 Suspended in the clouds, to aid the still
 And petrifying silence : then, again, 110
 Descended in loud cataracts ; the winds
 Burst on resistless, and together join'd
 Ocean and air t'augment the fearful scene,
 Unspeakable. ' But *dost* thou know the way ?'
 Once more inquired the Prince. ' I know the way,' 115
 In the same tone the mariner replied.
 The sea now raved with more transcendent wrath,
 And every blast that shook the element
 Seem'd like the blast portentous of man's end.

'I cannot see thy face,' exclaimed the prince, 120
 'And whither are we sailing? Fearful man!
 'I know thee not. Speak! I conjure thee speak!
 'Though it may bear a dagger to my heart;
 'This horrid silence chills me.' Not a word
 Answered the mariner, and as the prince 125
 Look'd with dread expectation, suddenly,
 A meteor (from thick darkness) blazed around,
 And by it, in the helmsman he beheld
 The man he murder'd!

Ghastly beam'd his eye; 130

His cheek was thin and sallow, and the blood
 Bathing his mantle, trembling, he beheld;
 Whilst, as he gazed, speechless and wild with dread,
 The light withdrew, and all again was dark,
 Darkness and tempest, and the rushing wind. 135

Now fast they sped o'er ocean, when a wave
 Tossed on a rock the bark. It instant bulged.
 Upon the crags Ivar upclimb'd, and look'd
 Eager around for shore or shelter; when
 Terror consumed his breast; he feared the prize, 140
 Th' immortal prize for which alone he toil'd,
 Was then to be caught from him, and these shores,
 (The mean inglorious haunt of cowardice,)
 Receive that heart which panted but to die
 The death of heroes. Whilst the prince thus mused, 145
 A light drew nigh; and now it nearer came,
 And still more near. The cause was manifest.
 It was a wandering Night-hag¹³ pacing slow
 The dark and stormy ocean. Ivar cried,
 'Whate'er thou art, oh, roamer of the seas! 150
 'Grant me thine aid.' Toward Ivar now she moved,
 Raising her lamp, when, by its feeble ray,
 He saw his perils. With inquiring gaze
 He sought for boat or boatman. Both were gone!

Thro' the thick gloom no form appear'd; and now 155
 O'er broken crags, and sea-weeds, up the shore,
 Labouring, he climb'd.

He mark'd the ocean Hag.

Back he recoil'd. Her face was pale as death.
 Her bones appear'd, scarce hidden by the skin 160
 That loosely cover'd them, whilst her dark eye
 Glisten'd like that of swine, when from half sleep,
 In slumbering mood, it casts its eye-ball up
 At foot approaching. 'Hither am I come,'
 Cried Ivar, 'to explore th' abodes profound 165
 'Where dwells the Fatal-Sister.'¹⁴ Her I seek
 'To commune with upon adventurous deeds,
 'And to inquire, in other worlds, how fares
 'My injured father.'¹⁵ I am Regner's son,
 'Ivar of Denmark. Know'st thou of her cave, 170
 'That I may pay obeisance, and disclose
 'My weighty tale?'

'Well do I know the spot,'

The Hag replied. 'From her thou seek'st, I sprang—
 'My potent mother. I beheld thee, far, 175
 'Toiling amid the waves, and thus approach'd
 'To do thee service. To our vault proceed.
 'But in this boisterous hour, declare who steer'd
 'Thy vessel hither?' Trembling, Ivar cried,
 'Some haggard fiend; I know him not, his name, 180
 'Nor whither he is gone. He landed me
 'Upon these savage rocks, and back return'd.'
 'It was our nightly herald,' spake the Hag;
 'Him we dispatch'd to bring thee to our dome,
 'And thou didst well to follow. Now advance 185
 'T' explore the depths profound, where I abide
 'In service evermore, save, when I aid
 'The suffering mariner. With ceaseless care
 'I guard all avenues that lead, where dwells
 'The sleeping Sorceress. Mortal, follow me.' 190

Slowly she strode. Ivar close follow'd her,
 When, as they moved, sudden a host of lamps
 Thick as heaven's stars, of fearful radiance, blazed,
 Making night day.

The spot on which he stood, 195

Was the rude base of a stupendous rock,
 Whose summit midnight hid, whilst here and there
 The fatal hemlock started, and the roots
 Of living mandrake. 'Are we not come near?'
 Cried Ivar; 'these most hideous shapes and things, 200
 'It needeth to be one like thee, to meet,
 'Unterrified.' They both in silence march.
 Th' attendant lamps, high in the rifted crag,
 Move on by power unknown: 'till to a cave,
 Wide spreading, and impenetrably deep, 205
 Shuddering he came. A shrill and unknown voice
 Sounds from within, when the mysterious fires,
 Sudden, are quench'd, and all is blackness round,
 Save one blue torch, that streaming thro' the air,
 Approach'd the Night-Hag. She her hand uprais'd, 210
 And having seiz'd it, bent before the cave,
 And mutter'd unintelligible words,
 With necromantic airs, and magic spells,
 Jarring and ominous, when thus she cried,
 'Prepare to tread these chambers hid in night; 215
 'Which never mortal foot hath dared profane,
 'Thro' untold ages, save, with special grace
 'Of her who dwells beneath, our potent queen.'
 The Hag proceeded. Doubtful stood the prince
 Whether to follow, or that instant rush— 220
 He knew not where, but mindful of his name,
 Boldly he trod her footsteps.

On they moved

Mid caverns intricate, and lofty vaults,
 Where bats and screech-owls and the ravenous crow 225
 Had their safe dwelling; ever flitting by,

Or sending sounds, reverberated far
 O'er all the black domain ; when to a pit,
 Yawning, they came. With sudden bound, the Hag
 Leap'd halfway down, standing awhile secure 230
 Upon a jutting stone that overhung
 Th' abyss beneath, all black ; when, at her call,
 A vollying vehicle, and huge, advanced,
 Sable as night, round which the trophies hung,
 Blood-dripping banners, and the battered helm 235
 Red from the war. 'Haste !' cried the guiding Hag.
 'Odin's swift car behold. He favours thee.
 'Stretch there thy limbs, and, to the depths beneath,
 'Descending, prove thy valour and thy heart.'
 Ivar the chariot sought. He started back. 240
 Serpent of Midgard ¹⁶ to his sight appear'd !
 With gore his fangs were clotted, whilst his mouth,
 Wide spread, the car presented. 'Hence ! Avaunt !'
 Cried Ivar, as he grasped his sword, and aim'd
 The death-devoting blow, when instantly 245
 Down the unfathomed void the monster plunged,
 And Ivar left, (his heart's-blood rolling back)
 Palsied with fear. 'Ah ! doth thy spirit quake ?'
 Exclaim'd the Hag. 'Nay,' answer'd Denmark's prince.
 'Then follow me,' she cried, 'with dauntless step,' 250
 And deeper still descended, while her torch
 Feebler, and feebler shone.

The edge he sought.

He downward cast an eye, then, fearlessly,
 Leaped where the Hag had stood ; when, roots he saw, 255
 Shooting their lank and spiral filaments,
 Far stretch'd, beneath, that offered feeble aid
 To all, the perilous descent who dared.
 The Hag still pass'd, scarce seen. Her single torch
 Ivar beheld. Behind, he glanced and saw 260
 Impenetrable midnight, and before,
 A gulf of depth unknown, whose mouth sent forth

Murmurs and fearful sounds. Again he heard
 Faint and more faint, the Hell-Hag's solemn call,
 'Dauntless proceed !' It was no time to pause ; 265
 When, grasping fearlessly the roots, he sprang
 From broken step to step, from rock to rock,
 And soon his guide o'ertook, who downward still
 Moved slowly with her blue and glimmering light.

Strange horrors shook his frame ! He saw the light, 270
 The only light, caught by some demon hand,
 Gigantic, and, as shuddering he beheld,
 It fell, and all was darkness. Tottering now
 'Tween earth and Neffheim deep, the prince, a chill,
 A cold and numbing chill, through all his frame 275
 Felt creeping, as on either side he gazed,
 Yet nothing saw, whilst to his ear there came
 One sound alone, his own fast throbbing heart,
 Raising faint echoes. Now on earth he stood,
 If name it might receive, where all was veil'd 280
 And blank uncertainty. In this suspense,
 Searching the inmost heart, his quivering arm
 Some unseen being seized ! It led him on.
 He could not choose ;—he follow'd, 'till at length
 The hand withdrew, when through the air there rose 285
 A dull and bubbling noise, from some near tide
 That wound amid scatter'd crags its sullen wave.

Whilst thus immured in darkness, unconceived,
 Unutterable, making even life
 Seem death disguised ; silent and half perceiv'd, 290
 A boat drew nigh, dividing the dull stream
 With gentle motion, that a dubious light,
 And fitful, cast around. 'Why laggest thou ?'
 Exclaim'd the Hag, who by him stood unseen,
 'Leap fearless to the bark !'—The prince obey'd, 295
 He plung'd into the flood ! no boat was there !

The Hag her hand extended, and uprais'd
 The struggling prince, when once again, on earth,
 He stands, unknowing how. Ivar look'd round.
 Once more he sees his guide. Thus she began, 300
 ' This stream is Gioll,¹⁷ through the infernal worlds
 ' Rolling his *dark* tide, which no ray of heaven
 ' Hath ever lighted on, nor vent'rous man
 ' Touch'd and survived, save thou, and such as thou,
 ' Favor'd of spirits kind. The waster Death, 305
 ' When tired of dogging his three ministers,
 ' Famine, and war, and pestilence, here hastes,
 ' And, plunging in this stream, again revives
 ' His appetite for slaughter. Now behold
 ' These unexplored domains.' She scarce had said, 310
 When two huge doors of adamant flew wide,
 And to his view displayed the secret vault
 Where Divination dwelt.¹⁸
 Spacious it was,
 And in the centre stood a cauldron. Fires, 315
 Crimson and purple, streaming upward, spread
 Throughout the scene a lustre, blazing now,
 Now half extinguished, whilst the chill air blew,
 And all was damp and dreary. To the roof,
 That frown'd new terrors, looking up, he saw, 320
 Wondering, a raven—with no raven's eye,¹⁹
 And mark'd unsightly shrubs and tapering roots,
 Wolfsbane and deadly-night-shade, thick o'erspread
 With living things abhorrent, by whose aid,
 Or heart, or liver, fibre, or thin scale, 325
 The infernal powers prepared their spells, and made
 Chains for unconscious mortals. Whilst his breath
 Labour'd with fear, the guiding Hag exclaim'd—
 ' Now must I leave thee. Yonder view the spot
 ' Where our great mother lies.' The prince turn'd round 330
 To claim her further service, but her form,
 Unknowing how, had vanished, and he stood,

Trembling amid th' fearful solitude.

Round him he gazed, expectant of all harm ;
 Then, sudden, look'd aghast ! A coffin, black, 335
 Slow rising from the yawning sepulchre,
 His sight arrested. As he earnest view'd,
 He saw the Sorceress ! In her narrow bed
 Senseless she lay, oppress'd with death-like sleep.
 A pall she had, the snows of ages. Her— 340
 The prince approach'd ; but when he mark'd her face,
 Her still and livid visage, and her eye
 That through the thin, thin eye-lid half appear'd,
 Back he recoil'd, in terror, but again
 Drew nigh her coffin and in tremulous tones 345
 Chanted the runic song.²⁰

The Sorceress, slow,

Her form uprais'd, stiff with the cavern's damp,
 Half red, half blue, ²¹ whilst venom'd drops distill'd
 Upon her *bare* head, from the craggy roof, 350
 Where countless reptiles hung, and things unknown,
 Scorpion and basilisk and hideous snake,
 Forming one mass of life : that, as they moved,
 Rapid or slow, gave back the cauldron's light
 In ghastly glare. When thus the Sorceress spake, 355
 Rolling her troubled eyes, ' I hear the call !
 ' What mortal dares disturb my long repose,
 ' And tread these mansions ?' Stern, she cast her eye,
 Her black and shining eye, on Ivar near,
 And cried, ' Who art thou ?' Shuddering, thus the prince. 360
 ' Searcher of fate to whom all times are known,
 ' Regard thy servant. Hither am I come
 ' To ask thy counsel. Say, oh Prophetess !
 ' Where is my murdered father, he who hoped
 ' To die in battle, fighting to obtain 365
 ' The meed of valour ; but, in evil hour,
 ' Seiz'd, and in dungeon slain ?'

Her fearful eyes

Around she rolled, then spake in solemn tone,
 ' Mourn not, Oh, man ! thy father ; he is safe. 370
 ' I know thee well. Thy father late I led
 ' To Odin's halls, and never such a shout
 ' Heard I at warrior's entrance. He is there,
 ' On sparkling thrones of gold : and from the skulls
 ' Of vanquished enemies ²³ he quaffs his mead, 375
 ' And feasts with the immortals. Now depart,
 ' And leave me to forgetfulness.' He cried,
 ' Sorceress, first hear me ; to the distant war,
 ' I forth am going ; many a gallant Dane
 ' With me hath vowed to cross the ocean-waves, 380
 ' And drench his sword in blood, and glut his rage
 ' With spoil and carnage. May I thither go,—
 ' And what the issue ?' Slowly thus she spake.
 ' I know thy resolution, but, Oh, prince !
 ' Regard the Destinies ! If there thou go,— 385
 ' Denmark no more shall see thee ! Now depart,
 ' And leave me to forgetfulness !' ' Oh stay,'
 Exclaim'd the Prince. ' One only question more ;
 ' And I will leave thee. Canst thou not bestow
 ' Some charm, some secret charm of powerful might 390
 ' That shall protect my fortunes ? girdle, cap, ²³
 ' Or minister to guard me ?'
 ' None,' she cried.
 ' No minister can guard thee ! I had once
 ' An earthly servant who was wont to stalk 395
 ' Upon the neighbouring shore, when howl'd the winds,
 ' And dash'd the waves, and huge Hresvelger ²⁴ flapp'd
 ' His wing, and woke the tempest. That brave man
 ' Might readily have served thee. His it was
 ' To watch the storm, and when the furious surge 400
 ' Cast on the shore some shipwreck'd mariner,
 ' All stiff and cold, he hither brought his corse
 ' To feed yon beings,—pendant from the roof

'That on thee look, thus furious;' when, his mouth,
 Each open'd wide. The Sorceress thus again, 405
 'Son of the upper world, look not amazed
 'At these my words: yon starving family
 'Must have some flesh and blood! He is no more
 'Who would have served them. A portentous noise,
 'Thrice echoed, lately rush'd across the dome;— 410
 'It was his spirit! Some hell-haunted man
 'Had murdered him!' When thus aloud she cried,
 'Why startest thou? Ah! is thy dagger stain'd?
 'What blood is that, and wherefore this dismay?
 'If thou would'st save thy miserable life— 415
 'Turn to the north.'²⁶ Ivar obedient turn'd,
 When on a dark and distant crag he spied
 Two twinkling fires. They toward him came. His heart
 Shrank with dismay; for now, a reptile form,
 Gliding, drew near. As Ivar earnest look'd, 420
 Beneath his sight it grew, large and more large!
 And now appear'd, a hideous monster, huge,
 Of serpent kind, with human countenance,
 And on the prince he fix'd his steady gaze.
 Ivar beheld the murdered mariner! 425
 His gory garb appear'd! He started back!
 And, wistless what he did, approach'd the Hag,
 And her stone tenement, still holding out
 His trembling hands. He touch'd the Witch's arm!
 'Twas ice! all ice! when sideways leaping far, 430
 His eye strings snapp'd, and on the hideous sight,
 On either side, his twisted eye-balls glared.
 Loud, from the roof, the raven flapp'd his wing!
 His claws the scorpion shook! the serpent hiss'd!
 While a deep groan,—came from the earth beneath! 435

O'erpower'd by agony of fear, the prince
 Awhile stood motionless; when 'mid the pause,
 He heard a rushing noise, like warring waves

Bending the ground below. Downward he looked,
 When, on each side, he saw a ravine, deep, 440
 O'er which his foot half hung, and in the gulf
 Conflicting torrents, such as when some whale
 Or ocean monster lashes the great deep.
 The Sorceress spake. 'Prince, on my words attend.
 'To distant wars thou goest; think of me. 445
 'If Denmark's shore thou leave, thou never more,
 'No, never, shalt return! Upon yon rock,
 'High over-head, I see thy name combined
 'With Death and Saxons.' Faltering, cried the Prince,
 'Check not my thirst of glory. Say not nay. 450
 'My heart upon revenge hath fed so long,
 'And I have nursed with such full ecstasy
 'The hope of vengeance, that, though death be mine,
 'I must subdue the Saxons, and with blood
 'Wipe out my many wrongs! My valiant sire, 455
 'Regner, they murder'd; I, revenge, have sworn.
 'This sword²⁶ was his, and, if I use it not,
 'How shall I meet my father? Think again
 'And if for death thou hast one antidote,
 'Deal it I pray.'

The Sorceress cried, 'Thy mind 460
 'Knows not to change its purpose; like heaven's bow
 'Once, and for ever bent; but, if thou still
 'With stubborn heart resolve to cross the seas,
 'Here take these threads. Thy sisters, three, require
 'To weave them in a standard, and display— 465
 'Yon Raven! Power shall it possess to screen
 'From hidden dangers, and no human force
 'Against thee shall prevail, while thou possess
 'This potent safeguard. Now, no more inquire,
 'Or I my wand will raise, and from the ground 470
 'Call up unnumber'd spirits, huge, and fierce,
 'And terrible to look on; these shall drag
 'Thy soul to Hela.'²⁷ After a brief pause,

Again she spake. 'Behold'st thou yonder form,
 'Whose sight thou startedst at? Hither he comes, 475
 'To learn my bidding.' To the Witch he crawl'd,
 And, heaving from the earth his crested neck,
 'Bent o'er her coffin; when the Sorceress spake.
 'Spirit, untimely slain! a mortal man
 'Now stands before me. To the wars he hastes, 480
 'Far o'er the seas, and many a wrathful deed
 'His hands will perpetrate. He now must pass
 'Through these mysterious vaults; be thou his guide.

'From this abode, three paths conduct to earth :
 'One, to the right, a plain and smooth ascent, 485
 'Where the wild chaplet crowns the barren rock,
 'And odours wander. One, the second way,
 'O'er crags is found, all black, mid aged moss,
 'Coeval with the world, in which there hide
 'Contending reptiles infinite, whose eyes 490
 'Like thine are bright. The third approach to earth
 'Lies thro' an avenue, at whose dark mouth
 'Two furious toads opposing stand and cast
 'Their deadly venom ever, scattering round
 'A slime, from which steams up the pestilence 495
 'That gives them life and spirits to renew
 'The rancorous warfare. Should one drop descend
 'Upon this mortal, all the powers combined,
 'Thro' Nefheim's realms; would vainly him preserve
 'From black perdition. Wide the passage spreads, 500
 'And terminates in gates, the which to touch
 'With this thy sting will burst, and then appears,—
 'The terrible ascent. The gates expand
 'Midway the pit, and o'er each step there hang
 'Black jutting rocks, trembling with every breath, 505
 'Held by the tangled ivy. To the eye
 'A light appears, a red uncertain light,
 'But whence it comes is hidden, for no lamp

' Nor fire is there ; while nothing can be grasp'd
 ' To aid the scared and trembling supplicant, 510
 ' But what thou dealest. Upward is the road,
 ' But, in the way, if once the traveller
 ' Should cast a sudden glance, down the deep void,
 ' A sight there is, two dragons climbing fast
 ' The dark abyss, with fangs of living fire, 515
 ' And eyes that feed the lightning. If thine aid
 ' One moment should withdraw, hope ceases, down
 ' The victim falls, the dragons following hard,
 ' But, never to o'ertake, till to the shades
 ' He plunges, where the tortured spirits howl.' 520
 Again she spake. ' These paths thou knowest well,
 ' Thou art unbodied, and no power have they
 ' To hurt or hinder thee. Receive thy charge.
 ' Conduct him hence, through either avenue,
 ' At thy disposal. Swift !' the Sorceress cried, 525
 And sank back in her coffin, which, again,
 Thro' the expanding earth, a fearful chasm,
 Descended slow.

As now he speechless stood,
 The cauldron's fires expired ! Throughout the vault 530
 No ray appeared, no solitary ray,
 Save where the serpent crouch'd ! Beneath his scales
 There shone a glow-worm light, whose feeble beams
 Midnight refused to share, and sent them back
 Close to their source. 535

Ivar distracted stood,
 Gnashing his teeth. He heard no sound, save one,
 The clanking of some distant chains, nor saw
 Aught but thick darkness · when he feebly cried,
 ' Odin ! Oh ! grant me one soul-cheering ray !' 540
 His voice yet linger'd in the air, when lo !
 A deaf'ning noise surrounded, and there rush'd
 Athwart the night profound, lightnings so fierce,

All forked, casting far so bright a glare,
 That by their aid he saw, till then unknown, 545
 The cave's extent. His curdling blood stood still!
 He laugh'd with fear; for near him he beheld
 A raving demon, chain'd, of monstrous size,
 Biting his fetters, foaming, mad with rage
 To see his prey, yet, by his iron bands 550
 Restrain'd from vengeance. As he trembling stood,
 A sudden flash of unimagined light
 O'erwhelm'd his eye-balls, when it burst and spread
 Its vivid lines; whilst, ever as he looked,
 A fiercer flash, resentful, darted near, 555
 And when he thought on death, exploded, loud,
 Sending its host of thunders through the cave.

Wild with excess of dread, he closed his eyes
 The hideous sight to 'scape. Whilst trembling, thus
 In utter night, some being at his back 560
 Pull'd heavily, when loud the prince exclaim'd,
 'A thousand worlds to save me! Guide me hence,
 'Oh injured spirit! Guide me from this scene
 'Of horrors infinite, and I to thee
 'Will give my earthly all!' 565

The serpent spake,
 'There was a time when baubles such as these
 'Would well have pleased me; but, a ghost become,
 'I heed them not. Within my power thou art,
 'And thou shalt learn how terrible my wrath. 570
 'I leave this dwelling; close attend my track,
 'And know, that if thou wander but a hair,
 'Death yawns to have thee.'—Slow the serpent moved,
 And as he moved, a shining slimy track
 Mark'd his curv'd path. Ivar upon it walk'd 575
 Through windings many, fearing at each step
 Sudden destruction! Now they both arrived
 Where the three turnings stood. The prince beheld,

One fill'd with fierce combustion ; heard with dread
 Th' unsightly monster's roar. Aghast he turn'd, 580
 And in the other path—the path he came,
 Saw darkness, save where creeping reptiles' eyes
 Glared on him. Then he look'd, and, to the right,
 Descry'd the third ascent : no fire was there—
 No angry reptile, but half light it was, 585
 The steps distinct and clear, the distance short,
 And at the top, shone the blue firmament.
 The serpent cried—' Mortal ! Now, follow me !'

What transport Ivar felt, when he beheld
 His guide wind slowly up the favour'd way 590
 That shone so bright and lovely ; and they came
 Into heaven's day-light ! Fill'd with joy supreme
 The prince turn'd round to pour his gratitude,
 When, with a spirit half congeal'd, he saw
 The gory mantle ! In his breast he felt 595
 Biting remorse, which made him close his eyes
 With inbred pangs, and when again he turn'd
 To pour th' o'erflowing heart, no guide appear'd ;
 No mouth of yawning cavern : both were gone :
 Vanished ; and all was solitude around. 600

Now in his mind, new apprehensions rose.
 The strange and desolated scene, displayed
 A character, scarcely allied to earth.
 It seem'd the spot where ruin dwelt alone ;
 For, as he gazed, on either side, alike, 605
 Fragments of lofty rocks encircled him,
 Forming one waste of stone, all wild and bare,
 That, through succeeding ages, crumbling fast
 By rains and winter frosts, from the tall peaks
 Came roaring down the precipice, and spread 610
 O'er all the valley, crags and shatter'd spars
 High-heap'd and massy—such as shadow'd forth

(To the wild fancy of the wondering prince)
 Nature exploded by those central fires,
 Following on SURTUR'S²⁹ reign, when all that is 615
 Shall sink in chaos. Hastening from the scene,
 Tho' doubtful where, at length, with joy, he marked
 The ocean near him, casting on the shore
 Its sweeping lines of foam, advancing slow,
 With murmurs faint, and of such equal sounds 620
 That silence scarce perceived them.—To the beach
 He hasten'd, and o'erjoyed beheld a ship
 Fast sailing near at hand. He cried 'Approach!'
 The prince was known—he bounded to the bark,
 And safe it bore him to his distant home. 625

No tongue might tell the doubts and cankering fears,
 That on the sisters prey'd, when night far waned,
 And yet the prince—reach'd not his father's halls.
 No sleep o'ertook them, whilst in every sound
 They heard his voice, or footstep, and arose 630
 With heart exultant, then again return'd,
 Languid and soul oppressed, to listen on
 Till morn illumed the air. No Ivar then
 Drew near to cheer them. Towards the boisterous wave
 Lashing the shore, still patiently they gazed. 635
 Ah! they behold him! From the beach, at hand,
 Solemn he paced, and now before them stands.

No word he spake! a dark and settled gloom
 Hung o'er his brow. 'What ails thee?' one exclaim'd.
 'I have seen sights,' he cried, 'so horrible; 640
 'Such sights of shadowy forms, and things unknown,
 'And past conception, that my swimming eyes
 'Seem chain'd to serpents; through my yielding brain
 'They to and fro glide on—all fire and slime,
 'And ghastly scales. Are ye my sisters, true? 645
 'My real sisters? Yea, I know you now.

'The hell-hag, where is she? I see her not!

'Ah! is she gone?'

The sisters trembling cried,

'What dreams are thine? that thou should'st thus afflict 650

'Thy soul and ours. What vision hast thou seen?'

'Tis past,' the prince exclaim'd. 'It is all o'er.

'My brain is cool'd. It was a sudden fit

'That half o'erpower'd me. What! do ye inquire

'The sight that moved me? 'twas a hellish sight! 655

'My feet have been to one, 'mid rocks and fires,

'Down to earth's centre: ³⁰ haggard was her look,

'Her bed a coffin, and her progeny

'Huge broods of serpents: from her icy touch

'I still am cold. My harrow'd soul hath felt, 660

'Since last we met, a shuddering weight of woe!

'Dangers of known extent this heart had spurn'd;

'But, conflicts with the unseen powers, whose might

'And habitudes are all uncertainty;

'This hath extorted from proud Regner's son, 665

'The trembling knee. Yet, listen once again,

'To the dread mansion of all evil things,

'A ghost conveyed me! Ivar made him such!

'A ghost defended me! now, here I swear,

'By this unconquer'd sword; by all the Gods 670

'That throng the halls of Valhall: day and night

'Feasting on Scrimner,³¹ mid the dance and song,

'Warfare and tales of death; by Odin's self

'Here do I swear, e'en by my sword of might,

'Never, from this good moment, in the Isle, 675

'Whereto I go, one soul to slay, save him

'Who dares the battle, and in armour bold

'Opposes my dominion; I have borne

'For one poor murder, such huge punishments,

'And freezing dread. Yet, do I scarcely know, 680

'Whether the sights that kindled up my fear

' Were real, or the baseless phantasies,
 ' Th' illusions of some sorceress in disguise.³²
 ' Oh! they were true! and I my oath repeat
 ' With ten-fold more solemnity.'— 685

Aloud,

The sisters all exclaim'd, ' We mark thy oath!
 ' Oh, Ivar! we do tremble at thy tale!
 ' But, hast thou seen the sorceress? and now, say,
 ' What are thy future fortunes? 690

He replied.

' These were her words. " Thy sisters three I know;
 ' Their spells must aid thee. Tell them to prepare;
 ' A banner tall, wrought with these magic threads,
 ' That shall display a raven. Guard it safe! 695
 ' It has a secret charm.' The cords I held
 ' Close in my grasp, but they are gone! all gone!
 ' I know not whither. Haste! a standard weave;
 ' The raven dark be on it; let the web
 ' Be strong and durable, and I will bear 700
 ' That standard to the wars.'

He scarce had said,

When the three sisters spread the woof and warp,
 And whilst they thought upon it, lo! 'twas done.³³
 ' Now, cried th' exultant prince, ' I hear a voice 705
 ' That tells me I shall vanquish, and display
 The might invincible. The banner near,
 Eager he grasp'd. and Starchaterus like,³⁴
 In pride pre-eminent, stalk'd toward the shore,
 Where, in their war array, his army stood, 710
 Impatient, waiting to behold their chief,
 Who thus address'd them.

' Heroes! far renown'd

' O'er all Helsingia, Gothland, and the coasts,
 ' And far as farthest Scythia,—hear my words! 715
 ' For other conquests, and, more glorious feats,
 ' Prepare your heart. From Britain's far-off shore

' I late return'd to Denmark, you to rouse,
' And bear to that devoted Isle, whose crimes
' No offering shall atone, nor aught allay 720
' The tempest of our passion. Have we yet
' Borne wrongs from any nation, unrevenge'd?
' And shall we Saxons spare, whose coward hands
' Slaughter'd my father, your victorious king?
' Never, till earth be vanish'd, warriors brave ! 725
' Their doom is fix'd ! Alfred their prince shall fall
' The victim of our wrath, and we will make
' That isle a desert—curs'd of gods and men :³⁵
' The day fast hastens to begin the work
' By us so loved, and we will laugh to see 730
' Their pleading looks ; and when they mercy ask,
' Think but of murder'd Regner. View the fleet !
' Advance ! The hour of vengeance draweth near.'

' Mid frantic looks of hate, and boiling rage,
Untameable, they join their barks, and now, 735
Mid songs and shouts, before the favoring gale,
Across the seas to Britain steer their course.³⁶

A L F R E D :

B O O K II.

SCENE—SOMERSETSHIRE.

ARGUMENT.

ALFRED, after the severest of his defeats, retreats before the Danes, and, as a temporary measure, announces to his troops his determination of retiring into solitude.—Oddune dismissed to encourage the West-Saxons.—Introduction of Sigbert.—Alfred appoints Selwood-Forest as the rendezvous of his troops.—Dismisses them.—He departs, with Alswitha his Queen, and their infant Son, toward a neighbouring heath.—Time, the Evening.—Season of the Year, Midsummer.

THE field is lost! Hubba, with savage joy
Cries, 'Havoc!' as the routed Saxons flee,
Bearing their king, reluctant, whilst the plain,
Far as the eye may reach, in sanguine hue, 5
Is strew'd with dead and dying. Now, the Danes,
Weary with slaughter, sheath'd the gory blade—
Raising a shout, terrific, such as seem'd,
Commingle with the elemental blast,
Death's harbinger; for never till that day 10
Had Alfred known so great an overthrow.

Leading his slender force, brave men and true,
The Saxon monarch, with high confidence,
The Danes had met, and valorous deeds were his,
And his compeers in glory. Sword to sword, 15

With strenuous might they fought, but what avail'd
 Courage, where few, with many hurl'd the lance,
 While those who should have propt their country's cause,
 Shrunk back, and view'd their brethren, saw their king
 Contending with barbarians, they, the while 20
 Heedless of freedom, and the patriot's call,—
 Sent from her ravaged towns, and wasted plains.

Far have the vanquish'd fled, and, wearied, now,
 Deep in a glen, surrounded by tall rocks,
 Age-worn, and hanging trees, whose foliage dark 25
 Half hid heaven's light, while, with soft melody,
 A mountain stream beside him murmuring flow'd,
 Stood Alfred, poring on his country's wrongs ;
 (Alswitha, with her infant, by his side,³⁷)
 Such cares were his as drink the spirit up. 30
 No word he utter'd, whilst his followers round,
 Few, shelterless, dispirited, forlorn,
 Survey'd their monarch's face, with such a look
 As when the wind sweeps o'er some grove, whose leaves
 Start into notice, and all silently 35
 Turn to th' obtruding breeze. While stillness reign'd,
 Thus spake the king—

“ Subjects and faithful friends !

‘ Behold your sovereign, stripp'd and desolate,
 ‘ Unfriended, save in you ; and this weak babe, 40
 ‘ This wretched mother, partners in his grief,
 ‘ And none to aid.”

The veterans' breasts once more
 Courage inflames. Each clash'd his shield, and cried,
 As in his heart affection fuller reign'd, 45
 ‘ This arm shall aid thee, Death or Victory !”

The monarch answer'd, “ Gen'rous men, your swords
 ‘ Vainly contend, On every side the Danes
 ‘ Like locusts congregate, and locusts like

- ' No preference know, but all who breathe the air, 50
 ' Old men and mothers, youths and orphan babes,
 ' Fall merciless, in one promiscuous heap,³⁸
 ' Oh, Albion dear! my country! Where are now
 ' Thy quiet habitations? Where thy fields
 ' Smiling in verdure? Where thy orchard plots?— 55
 ' Thy waving corn-lands?—or thy villagers,
 ' Chanting their harvest home? Where now the smiles—
 ' The hearty greetings, and the social cheer
 ' When friend met friend, in joyous holyday?
 ' Cold, motionless,—all is a wintry gloom! 60
 ' And Saxon, meeting Saxon, now, looks up,
 ' And silent, passes on.—O, misery!
 ' Our slaughter'd brethren, or what once were they
 ' Courting the birds of air, or ravenous wolf,
 ' Unburied lie! mothers and little-ones, 65
 ' Bleaching the hills and vallies with their bones!
 The sigh is heard, rending the troubled breast.
 Alfred again. ' Subjects! I love you well,
 ' And that affection, in this hour of woe,
 ' Inflicts the deadlier pang. O'erwhelming thought! 70
 ' Thousands whom once we knew, brave like yourselves,
 ' Where *are* they? those, so late, who felt their hearts
 ' Throb with heroic courage, saw their homes
 ' Burnt and destroy'd, their children heap'd in death,
 ' Their lawful prince, a wanderer thro' the wilds, 75
 ' And woods, and mountains?—men like you, who spurn'd
 ' Inglorious ease, when danger reign'd around,
 ' And in their wrath rose valiantly, to strive
 ' With demons in man's shape. These all are gone,
 ' Down to th' untimely grave, where you must go, 80
 ' If with vain hope longer you dare the strife.
 ' Hard thoughts, and many, press upon my mind:
 ' I would disclose them, but a secret weight
 ' Keeps my tongue silent; yet, they shall be told,
 ' Tho' painful. We must part!" 85

A sudden pause

Seem'd to prevade the air, and every eye
 Intentful gazed upon him. 'We must part!
 Then sounded from the brook; the very trees,
 Attentive, far around, caught the same words, 90
 And in responses murmured—'We must part!'

Stiffing his secret grief, again the king.
 'Befits us, friends, and subjects, to survey
 'Our real state. Here, under heaven's vast arch,
 'Alone we stand; no house to shelter us, 95
 'Our homes made desolate, our bravest men,
 'The bulwark of our country, all laid low!
 'What prospect have we? Not like former foes
 'Come these fierce Danes,³⁹ to grasp ideal good,
 'Wealth, fame, or honors: not like former foes, 100
 'Disheartened at the sight of blood, stand these,
 'And see their fallen friends; the gasp of death,
 'With all its horrors, in their minds excites
 'Tumultuous ecstasy, and leaves no hope
 'But to partake the same triumphant end. 105
 'Yet Wessex wars alone! Our countrymen,
 'View not the gathering storm, whose sudden rage,
 'Erelong will pour confusion on them all.'

His listless eye he cast upon the ground;
 When each man, who, before, felt bold enough 110
 To talk most long, and eloquent, now stood
 Silent, and knew how weak the power of speech
 To tell the heart's warm feelings.

Alfred thus,

'Most injured men! it now were worse than vain 115
 'To cheer you with false hopes. On every side
 'The Danes present the javelin,⁴⁰ and at length,
 'Saxons must shun the fight! Here now we are,
 'Few, destitute, left to contend alone.

' At such an hour, when every gift of heaven 120
 ' Hangs in the scale; when ruin stalks abroad,
 ' And all that life endears is jeopard'd,
 ' Who would presume in Saxons, that brave race;
 ' To find corroding jealousies? What heart
 ' Would dare to harbour, in some bleak recess— 125
 ' Thought,—that impaired the character of man!
 ' That Saxons, foremost in the generous deed,
 ' Should now, with alien apathy, disdain
 ' The calls of loyalty, their hearths, their homes,
 ' While Danes make Desolation clap her hands. 130

' You cannot hope to conquer and support
 ' Alfred and Britain, 'gainst these faithless men,
 ' As multitud'nous as the stars, they come "⁴¹
 ' From some far land, hiding the very face
 ' Of our green ocean, whilst, in tardy strife 135
 ' Our numbers waste, we fall by conquering.
 ' Whatever men can do, you all have done
 ' In freedom's cause, for life and liberty;
 ' Yet, what avails it? Ills on ill's arise.
 ' The pitiless defeat your king has known! 140
 ' And Cypanham now is fall'n, our last strong tower."⁴²
 ' My faithful subjects, *Wessex* strives in vain!
 ' *There* is the evil! Where in war array,
 ' Appear Northumbria's levies—Mercia's sons—
 ' The men of Essex—Sussex—or the hosts 145
 ' From either Anglia? "⁴³ Where do these appear
 ' Now England's foes spread death and ruin wide?
 ' Our coward countrymen behold unmoved
 ' The fury of these Danes—contented see
 ' Our fruitless efforts—and remember not, 150
 ' The ruin we deplore, themselves awaits.
 ' There is another evil, deep and dark.
 ' Wessex herself, in this disastrous hour,
 ' Doth not appear with her whole weight of strength

' To aid her rights, to succour me her king, 155
 ' To hurl destruction on th' insulting Dane.—
 ' I would e'en spare my subjects ! but, in vain !
 ' Truth will be heard ! They now remember not
 ' Courage should grow with danger ; they have sought
 ' Inglorious and deceitful rest, and left 160
 ' These gallant bands to perish by the foe !
 ' Evils must cure themselves. Let then the storm
 ' Rage through the land ! Experience shall at length
 ' Strip folly of her mask, when, through our isle
 ' Rapine and murder, in their towering car, 165
 ' Ride on triumphant ! then shall men awake
 ' From their deep lethargy, and call aloud
 ' On Alfred ! whom in evil hour they left
 ' To bear the wrath of this o'erwhelming storm !
 ' I now withdraw awhile. The time will come 170
 ' When common danger shall throughout the land
 ' Rouse common sympathies, and nerve each arm
 ' With wonted courage : then will I appear,
 ' And not till then. Wisdom, not cowardice,
 ' Prescribes the plan, which firmness shall pursue. 175

' Sorrowing I leave you ! For your unknown homes
 Go search, and, whether they be found, immured
 ' In some dark forest, or upon the top
 ' Of barren hills, or deep in mountain cave,
 ' Or mid the precipice—safe may you be ! 180
 ' No longer shall your precious blood be shed
 ' In useless combat. Haste ! Some refuge find,
 ' And tho' in secret I awhile must dwell,
 ' Yet, like the spirit of each man, that still
 ' Followeth in light and darkness, so will I 185
 ' Unnoticed, haunt your footsteps, and, again,
 ' When hope shall rise, start forward, like the sun,
 ' Emerging in his strength, from some dark cloud
 ' That many a dubious day hath warr'd in heaven.'

Silent he stood, and, with heart-weariness 190
 Chanced to espy the brook, slow murmuring near;
 Whilst interruptions from the stones, that strew'd
 Its shallow bed, or the thick dancing reeds,
 Stay'd not its course, for, still with earnest speed,
 And undiverted, fast it roll'd along, 195.
 Never to know tranquillity, till mix'd
 With the great mass of waters. 'So must thou'—
 A still small voice repeated—'So must thou,
 'Toil on, O, king! nor vainly hope to gain
 'A quiet, till in death, that ocean, lost,' 200

The musing prince looked up, for Devon's Earl,"
 Oddune, now stood before him: with an eye
 That told the sorrowing heart, he thus began.—
 'If in thy wisdom, for the public good,
 'Thou deem it needful, thrice illustrious king! 205
 'To shun th' unequal conflict, and, awhile,
 'Withdraw to solitude, that those who now
 'Renounce thy cause, by bitter discipline,
 'May learn their folly—prosperous be thy path!
 'But, in hereafter times, when I am low, 210
 'Let not my brave descendants, scornful say,
 'That, in misfortune, Oddune left his prince,
 'The pride of christendom, the truest friend
 'That ever friendship greeted. Where thou go'st,
 'To soothe thy injured spirit, best of kings! 215
 'Let me attend,'

'It is no common joy,
 'In hour like this,' said Alfred, 'to behold
 'Thy constancy, O, chief! but, sad it is,
 'To hear the prayer of friendship, and to know 220
 'That prayer must be denied. My course is fix'd!
 'I by myself will go. No mortal man
 'Shall see and think of Alfred. Heaven hath saved
 'In many an hour, with human aid far off:

' And that same God is yet omnipotent. 225
 ' But, though thy wish I grant not, still I ask
 ' Proof of thy stern fidelity. Haste thou,
 ' Down to my western friends ;⁴⁵ what may be done
 ' There, or elsewhere, I know thou wilt perform.
 ' Truly I prize thee, Oddune ! much is due 230
 ' To faithfulness like thine, and much my heart
 ' Fain would repay—but, it is yet denied.'

Oddune in sorrow heard, and thus replied.
 ' Sovereign revered ! tho' I had fondly hoped,
 ' Long to attend thee, yet, at thy command, 235
 ' Cheerful, will I depart, and trust me, prince !
 ' If prayers can serve thee, thou shalt prosper still.'
 He said, and turning, sought the western land.

Alfred beheld him journeying, and thus cried,
 To her, the pride of womanhood, his queen, 240
 (Who on a bank, tall trees her canopy,
 Sat leaning o'er her child) ' Alswitha, hear !
 ' A better subject than yon gallant chief,
 ' No king hath honor'd, one, within whose heart
 ' More loyalty prevails, and every grace 245
 ' That visits mortals. Many promise fair,
 ' Who, in the hour of trial, stand aloof,
 ' Or with cold interest serve ; but he, brave man !
 ' Displays, as dangers thicken, nobler powers,
 ' And more intense reality of faith, 250
 ' And growing steadfastness. Behold him there !
 ' Pacing with solemn step beside the brook,
 ' In deep thought exercised for Britain's weal,
 ' (Nor quite unmindful of thyself and me.)
 ' He goes 'mid death and perils ! Heaven will guard 255
 ' Such worth as his, from the night-prowling wolf,⁴⁶
 ' Or fiercer Dane. If ever prince should find
 ' Subject like Oddune, let him not rejoice
 ' That God hath dealt a crown, but, given a friend.'⁴⁷

'What means yon sudden tumult?' cried the king, 260
 As hastening through the troops, in black attire,
 A stately man drew near, who, nothing spake,
 Till to the spot where Alfred stood he came;
 His garment was a monk's, yet on his head
 A warrior's casque⁴⁸ he wore. 'Whence? and thy name?' 265
 Said Alfred, as he seiz'd his good sword's hilt.
 The stranger wildly spake, (surprize around)
 'Here do I stand before my noble king,
 'The poorest and most abject wretch, whom grief
 'Hath with remorseless fury, in her hour 270
 'Of deepest visitation, prey'd upon.
 'Abbot of Wilton, prince, behold in me!
 'Sigbert!' exclaim'd the king, 'I knew thee not
 'And whence this strange deportment?' thus he cried.

'Wilton's fair pile, the flower of Wessex land, 275
 'Danes have destroyed. My friends are slain! and now
 'Whether these limbs be mangled, this weak head
 'Put on by clumsy artizan, and made
 'To dance thus wonderful, I cannot say;
 'But, such foul sights of death and direful waste 280
 'Still float before me, that my swimming brain
 'Yet doubts if all be not a very dream;
 'A shadowy trance, and I a pious monk,
 'My cell beside me. No! It cannot be!
 'For how should pious monk, feel as I do 285
 'Such fixed and unextinguishable hate—
 'Such cravings to destroy. Blood! Rapine! Spoil!
 'The Danes are near; I see them in the clouds;
 'For they, like men,, need not the sluggish use
 'Of bone and sinew when they move to death. 290
 'Th' infernal fiends assist them. Listen, king!
 'This is no idle hour; dig thou a pit,
 'Immeasurably deep, 'neath yon huge hill,
 'For thee and for thy subjects, I will stand

' At the dark mouth, and yell a withering tune, 295
 ' A tune about the Danes, and their mad deeds,
 ' That shall put all to flight, save imps of hell.
 ' Pardon, O, king! This fever of the brain
 ' Makes me forget my very name and place.'

He said, and roll'd his starting eye-balls round, 300
 Fearful, in vacancy. The king amazed,
 Look'd on the abbot with deep earnestness,
 Then turning, with a sigh, thus spake. ' O, God!
 ' Whatever punishment thy hand may deal
 ' To cleanse from sin's deep stain—Almighty sire, 305
 ' Preserve my reason! Take whate'er thou wilt,
 ' But spare, oh spare my reason!" As he spake
 Sigbert more calm appeared; when, Alfred thus.
 ' If recollection serve, declare, O, man!
 ' How Dane's possess'd themselves of that fair place; 310
 ' The spot where I had hoped to rest my head,
 ' After the toil of life's hard pilgrimage,
 ' In quiet sepulture.' He thus replied.

' In Wilton's pious house, ⁴⁹ good men around,
 ' And wise as good, (save him addressing thee.) 315
 ' I govern'd righteously. From morn to night,
 ' We chanted forth Heaven's praises, fed the poor,
 ' And taught the ignorant, and lived methinks
 ' As God would have us live. We heard of wars,
 ' Rumours of wars and strifes, from passing pilgrim, 320
 ' Or from the men who roved from land to land
 ' Driving their flocks and herds to 'scape the Danes,
 ' Who, as they journey'd on their perilous way,
 ' Oft-times to listen stood; and gazed around,
 ' Cautious, to see if foe approach'd. These men 325
 ' Declared such deeds of th' invading host,
 ' That, to believe them possible, we strove,
 ' But could not, such our confidence in Heaven.

' At length, upon an eve, no longer left
 ' To doubtful rumour, we beheld the foe, 330
 ' (Led on by Hubba, that disastrous pirate,
 ' Fierce for barbarian deeds !) shouting ⁶¹ draw near.
 ' A holy father ventured to go forth
 ' And ask them their design. We saw him slain !
 ' Then death was visible ! Each call'd on God. 335
 ' While on our knees, we saw the ceiling red
 ' From the destructive torch that blazed without.
 ' We heard the crash of wood ! the doors were forced !
 ' The Danes rush'd in ! the work of death began !
 ' Relics and shrines, ⁵² all was one overthrow. 340
 ' O spare my anguish ! spare my burning brain !
 ' I fled, yes, here I am.

' Mark me, O king !

My rage is past, I now can coolly speak,
 ' Tell thee my purport, like a wise man, calm : 345
 ' No friend hath Sigbert, not one soul survives
 ' Of all he loved ! Normans ⁵³ have murder'd them !
 ' I pant for blood, and I will have my fill !'
 He said, and in an instant rais'd his scarf,
 And cast it to the air, and underneath, 350
 ' Mid wild astonishment, discover'd hid
 A warrior's armour ! Thus again he spake :
 ' This armour was a chieftain's, whom I saw
 ' Slain on the moor ; I seized it ; put it on ;
 ' And having found *thee* after tedious search, 355
 ' Here do I swear, that Sigbert shall henceforth
 ' Live for one object, let one only hope
 ' Dwell in his breast ; and when the madd'ning thought
 ' Of home destroy'd—friends slain— or country wrong'd
 ' Shall cross his mind, with vulture's appetite, 360
 ' And lion's rage, loud shall he call for blood.''
 The stranger ceas'd. Convulsions heaved his frame.
 His hands clench'd each the other, whilst his eye
 At heaven gazed steadfastly. When Alfred thus.

‘Sigbert! I mourn thy wrongs. Thy service here, 365
 ‘I need not. Whilst thou seek some safe retreat,
 ‘Angels be thy protectors.’ From the king,
 Instant he turn’d, rage beaming from his eye,
 And sped, unknowing where.

Heavy at heart, 370
 Alfred now turn’d, to bid his faithful troops
 Flee to their lone retreat. He sought to speak,
 But sorrow check’d his words. The moment came
 When his resolves first fail’d him; till, at length,
 He found th’ imperfect utterance, and began. 375

‘Friends! brethren! subjects! you, whose gallant deeds
 ‘So oft have check’d the Danes; so oft have made
 ‘Their monstrous bucklers⁵⁴ feel the heavy weight
 ‘Of your good swords; forget not now your strength
 ‘Tho’ forc’d to yield the contest, and alone 380
 ‘Roam through the wood and wilderness, oppress’d—
 ‘With secret dread, and hard disquietude,
 ‘Hold not your courage light, for you have fought
 ‘As bravely for your homes and innocents,
 ‘As ever mortals fought. Your noble deeds, 385
 ‘In martial fame shall be recorded high;
 ‘Whilst every Saxon who in coming years
 ‘Dwells on th’ inspiring tale, shall proudly say,
 ‘These heroes were our sires! but we are doom’d
 ‘To suffer from false friends, and in them find 390
 ‘Our bitterest foes—So let the punishment
 ‘Due to their crimes o’ertake them!—

‘Have I not—
 ‘Say, Oh my subjects! have I not endured,
 ‘E’en, with the meanest of you, hunger, cold;— 395
 ‘The beating tempest, wind, and hail, and rain?
 ‘When have I shunn’d the Danes, their black array,
 ‘Their furious onset, or, amid the fight,
 ‘Stood motionless, and not display’d my sword,

' And like yourselves fought resolute? ⁵⁵ In vain!— 400
 ' Deserted, destitute, we must, awhile,
 ' Th' unequal combat shun. Alfred, in arms,
 ' Will but inflame the vengeance of the foe,
 ' And stimulate to fiercer deeds of blood!
 ' Altho' th' indignant spirit burn within, 405
 ' Till duty call, now Saxons! we must haste
 ' Each to his secret place!'

The monarch ceased;

For, as he strove to say—' Subjects, farewell!'
 His big heart throb'd, and hard and difficult 410
 Was it to check his grief. Upon his cheek
 Anguish was visible, and all around,
 Mark'd the tumultuous throe, which, like the wave
 That calleth up the spirit of another,
 Made their eyes dim, and, for a moment, each— 415
 Put off the hero. Silence breaking thus,—
 Alfred exclaim'd: 'It was a passing cloud!
 ' Once more are we ourselves.—No season this
 ' For idle feeling. We must meet our fate
 ' Firm, as befiteth men. 420

' I would advise,

' (And my advice, e'en now, will not be spurn'd)
 ' That you repair to Selwood's forest shade ⁵⁶:
 ' Waiting your monarch's summons: there abide,
 ' Construct the fortress, form the dart and bow, 425
 ' And live on hope, the balm of wretchedness.
 ' Oh, subjects! whom affliction's heavy hand
 ' Binds closer to my heart, the glorious time
 ' Hastens on, I fain would hope, when to your homes
 ' You may return triumphant: and, tho' now 430
 ' I cease the strife, yet in th' auspicious hour
 ' When Saxons, wearied with the yoke of slaves,
 ' And taught their folly by the wrongs they bear
 ' From iron-hearted Danes, shall think again
 ' Of past delights, of freedom, and the king 435

' Whom they, in his misfortunes, heedless left
 ' Unshelter'd to the storm ; when they shall seek
 ' Once more deliv'rance, and, on Alfred call—
 ' As thunder follows the bright flash of heaven,
 ' So will I follow hope, and still be' found 440
 ' First, at the call of honour. Till that hour
 ' Subjects, and friends,—farewell ! "

He scarce had ceas'd,
 When loud and pealing shouts, tumultuous rose,
 ' To Selwood ! ' ' Selwood ! ' ' Prosper still, ' they cried 445
 ' Oh, God ! our noble king ! ' when the whole host
 Turn'd sorrowful, to seek the forest shade.

Now, cold at heart, Alfred approach'd, to greet
 The partner of his sorrows. Still she sat 450
 Bending to earth, over her infant child
 That on her breast lean'd quietly. He cried
 ' Joy of my heart, Alswitha ! ' Up she rose,
 And seem'd like one awaked, from a long dream :
 Her eyes were wild, and eager gazing round, 455
 With lifted hand, she spake, ' Alone, my king. "
 ' Yes, ' he replied, ' and we must now go forth
 ' To find another home. Give me thy child,
 ' Thus early taught to suffer. ' She obey'd,
 And they together sought the neighbouring heath. 460

A L F R E D :

BOOK III

ARGUMENT.

ALFRED, in wandering over the heath, meets a Beggar, with whom he divides his only loaf. Arrives at Glastonbury Abbey, leaves Alswitha and his infant boy there, and departs alone to seek some obscure retreat.

‘THOU lovely Moon !’ cried Alfred, as he roam’d
Across the trackless moor, all wide and waste,
Bearing his infant child. Upon his arm—
Alswitha lean’d, for they had wander’d long,
And it was night. ‘Thou lovely Moon,’ he cried, 5
‘How calm thou art ! thou journeyest on thy way,
‘Nor heed’st the mists, that sailing thro’ the sky,
‘Oft half conceal thee, for thou passest on,
‘Casting thine eye, disdainful, at the clouds,
‘The low and scatter’d clouds, that fain would hide 10
‘Thy majesty, pale empress of the night !
‘And have not I a mind, my better part !
‘More vast than is yon orb ? an intellect
‘That ranges unconfined, through time and space,
‘Scorning their narrow limits ? What is this,— 15
‘This thinking faculty ? this prison’d soul—
‘Teeming with vast desires, that acts and plans
‘Within me ? Is it not, ere long, ordain’d
‘To cast aside its fetters and assert

- ' Its native dignity ? I know it is ! 20
 ' Founded on God's imperishable Word :
 ' Aye, in those regions, where thou sitt'st enthroned
 ' In empyrean glory, lovely Moon !
 ' I feel a sudden and mysterious calm
 ' Shoot through my frame. This mind will follow thee. 25
 ' Go on, ye grovelling clouds ! increase in size,—
 ' In number ! gather round my head, and strive
 ' To hide that light eternal ! call the winds,
 ' And tempests to your aid ! yet, undisturb'd,
 ' I will behold your impotence, and smile. 30
 ' Sorrows and pangs of frail humanity,
 ' Upon the wings of ages do ye fly,
 ' Fast as the clouds of night, whilst I shall live
 ' Clad in the robe of immortality
 ' When your bright orb is quench'd.' 35

The King, a joy

Felt cheer his heart, as thus on lofty themes
 He meditates ; but soon the busy thoughts
 Of his own crushing cares,—his country's wrongs,
 Like an o'erwhelming flood, rush'd thro' his mind, 40
 And he was sorrowful.—Thus picturing well
 Our mortal feelings : like the ocean tide,
 Now ebbing, and now flowing ; but, ere long,
 (Vicissitude pass'd by, memento dread !)
 The endless to the fleeting will succeed. 45

While these reflections o'er his countenance
 Cast seriousness, unwittingly he smiles !
 For at that moment he beheld his boy,
 (Stretched on his father's arm) who wondering lay—
 At that fair lamp on high, whose tranquil beams 50
 Lit the wide heavens :—and now, with new delight
 Aloud he laughs,—to see the full-orbed moon,
 With her fair clouds, and leaps with sudden start
 Of infant gratulation,

Alfred spake.

55

' We now are wandering far, and lest this garb,
 ' Still bearing marks of royalty, though worn,
 ' And half obscured, should tell my name and state,—
 ' Here will I leave it : on this barren heath
 ' To moulder and endure the winds of heav'n. 60
 ' Thy dress is simple, thou hast nought to fear.'
 When on the ground the king his mantle cast.
 The glimmering light now streak'd the orient sky.
 ' Thou dost not speak to me,' said Alfred, ' speak
 ' That I may hear thy voice, and know indeed 65
 ' Thou art not sorrowful.' Alswitha thus.
 ' I can but speak, thy kindness to confess,
 ' Best friend ! and blameless cause of all my woe.'

Whilst wandering thus, far o'er the heath, they see
 A moving shape, that in the early dawn 70
 Seem'd hast'ning toward them. Travelling slow it was,
 With size and motion so peculiar,
 That, to compare it to familiar thing,
 They could not. ' Quick, my lord,' Alswitha cried,
 ' I do not like yon form. With needful speed 75
 ' We soon shall pass this spirit-freezing spot,
 ' For from our right it comes, and we are first.'
 ' Nay, fear it not,' said Alfred,—' Let us wait
 ' To see and satisfy our doubting minds.'
 The queen exclaim'd. ' With danger sport not thus ! 80
 ' It is the loneliest corner of the heath
 ' Where ghosts ⁵⁷ might walk by instinct ; e'en the turf
 ' Treads hollow, and the breeze, slow passing by,
 ' Whispers mysterious meanings. Haste my Lord !'
 ' Not so,' replied the king. ' Who trusts in God, 85
 ' Encompass'd by his shield of providence,
 ' Needs nothing fear, and least of earthly things
 ' The ghost, thou darest.' Words, regarded not.
 Alswitha hurries on, a few short steps,

Then turning, saw her child, and back return'd 90
To share her lord's misfortunes.

Whilst they spake,
The doubtful form drew nearer, till at length
A cripple, dragging his weak limbs, appear'd.
'Oh, pity me!' he cried, 'it was most kind 95
'To stop on this wide down to hear my tale,
'For I am poor, and hunger in my breast
'Aloud doth call for bread. Have ye no food
'To give an *old* man?' 'Yes,' the king replied,
'And thou shalt have a part.' Alswitha said, 100
'A small part, husband, for thou knowest well
'How scarce it is, and on this trackless moor
'Our babe may cry in vain. I weep for age,
'And, for myself, would give him all *the loaf*.
'For we have only one; but, then, the child! 105
'Bethink thou of the child, nor quite forget
'Thine own hard wants.' The king no answer made,
But took the scrip, and open'd it, and said;
'This is our all, old man! one half is thine!' ⁶⁸
And Alfred parted it. 'God prosper thee!' 110
Replied the aged man, then fast assuaged
The pang of hunger. Alfred turn'd the while
And to the queen thus spake :

'Hear, best beloved!
'Words that from mildness spring. Strict, must we guard 115
'The plant humanity. its leaves are tender,
'And he who checks their wild luxuriance,
'Will find them pine, and, from th' unfriendly soil,
'At length, slow die away. Proud man supports
'His boasted independence, and would fain— 120
'Prying in cold futurity's grey dawn,
'Plan for himself, and govern, free of heaven.
'That Being who surveys all mortal things,
'Best knows our wants; He sees them manifest,
'While yet they have no name, and, on the heart 125

' Whose trust he is, bestows, if seem him right,
 ' The flattering good, but, given or denied
 ' Is done in mercy. Let us look to God,
 ' And do his will, and we shall have enough
 ' Of food and raiment : more we must not hope, 130
 ' Nor need desire.' Alswitha wept consent,
 And faltering answer'd — ' Give the poor man all !
 ' We trust in God.'

The beggar now approach'd
 His benefactors, and with grateful words 135
 Thank'd them full oft. ' Now, pray thee,' said the king,
 ' How cam'st thou here, alone, and destitute ?
 ' Whilst journeying onward, freely tell thy tale.
 ' Tho' strangers, we are friends.' He thus began :

' Pardon the tedious words of an old man. 140
 ' My name is Nidor ; far o'er yonder Tor⁵⁹
 ' My dwelling was ; a hut of humbler sort,
 ' Yet such as I could love, for it was warm ;
 ' And there was space to sit beside the fire,
 ' Or turn the spindle, and without were heap'd 145
 ' Faggots⁶⁰ and straw to last till Candlemas.
 ' Upon the top of a green sloping hill
 ' Our hamlet stood, whilst in the vale beneath
 ' Another hamlet rose, and they were called
 ' The sister villages. A lovely spot ! 150
 ' Such as the trav'ler oft would stop to view,
 ' Over and over, but would nothing say,
 ' Sorrowing to leave, yet loth to look again,
 ' Lest he should cease to be a traveller.
 ' From youth to age beside my cottage door, 155
 ' A yew-tree waved, under whose spreading shade
 ' I oft have sat, and view'd the glorious sun,
 ' Smiling, with all around me ; mark'd the hills
 ' In the blue distance, over which these feet
 ' In earlier days had wandered, stranger then 160

'To every malady. How many an hour,
 'Neath that cool tree, have I reclined myself,
 'And carved my name, while yet in boy-hood years,
 'And sung the merry song, or, with my lute,
 'Piped to the dancing villagers, and made 165
 'Tottering four-score forget his load of care,
 'Half young again! But, I am talking wild!
 'These pleasant thoughts so fill an old man's mind,
 'That he could dwell for ever on them. Now,
 'Sorrowing, my tongue a heavier tale shall tell. 170

'Three nights before the wane of yonder moon,
 'There came a noise! Some, rushing to their doors,
 'Beheld with strange dismay, th' o'erwhelming flames
 'Consuming our near hamlet! We could hear
 'The cry of infants, and the mother's shriek,⁶¹ 175
 'Falling before the Danish massacre!
 'My better days were pass'd, and I had lain
 'Long 'neath my roof, in burdensome old age;
 'From morn to night, from night to lingering morn,
 'Seeking some change, that only brought again 180
 'The same unvarying round of restlessness;
 'When, like a sudden storm, the foe drew nigh!
 'Forgetful of old Nidor, all my friends
 'Sought each his life. My children were far off
 'Who would have succour'd me. Deserted thus, 185
 'A miserable man! it seem'd most hard
 'To lie and, all alone, receive my end,
 'Dreadful as certain. Resolute I rose;
 'And tho' till that sad hour, I thought myself
 'A weak bed-ridden man, yet sudden fear 190
 'So on me wrought, that I, in truth, appear'd
 'Gifted with youth afresh. Alert I seized
 'This neighbouring crutch, when, hastening through the door,
 'I just remember'd, that in *Ethelney*,⁶²
 'That fair sequester'd Isle! I had a son, 195

' (As good a son as ever father priz'd,
 ' Bounteous to all, so far as his low cot
 ' Might deal in bounty;) and turn'd zealously
 ' To seek his dwelling. I am on my way,
 ' But never farther had I gone,—this moor 200
 ' Would soon have proved old Nidor's bed of death,
 ' But for your food, good christians! Pardon me!
 ' I never saw your faces till this hour,
 ' Nor know your names, nor whither you are bound
 ' In these disastrous times; but if no house, 205
 ' No better house should wait you, by my troth,
 ' My son's shall be your dwelling. Haste with me!
 ' And you shall find good cheer, tho' humble! Come,
 ' I pray you come!'

Alfred uncertain stood: 210

When, as he paus'd, there to his sight appear'd
 A stately pile, of which the king inquired,
 ' It is,' said Nidor, ' Glastonbury;⁶³ famed
 ' O'er all the land, where holy monks abide;
 ' And where the singing is both night and day.⁶⁴ 220
 ' By this I see my path is to the right,
 ' And yours I trust.'

' I cannot go thy way,'

Alfred replied. ' The place in view, I seek,
 ' But, I return with feelings of good will, 225
 ' Thy kind proposal. Thine the friendly words,
 ' Such as we Saxons loved, before the Danes
 ' Made cold our hearts, and taught us to respect
 ' Our wants, while yet uncertain. Take my prayers,
 ' Thou good old man! my unfeign'd gratitude, 230
 ' And health attend thee.' Many greetings kind
 Then each exchanged of blessings and of hopes,
 And thus they parted.

Whilst they paced along,

Upon the abbey gazing with delight, 235
 Whose circling arches⁶⁵ rose majestic

And lofty turrets, mantled in the garb
 Of hoar antiquity,—so dark!—so vast!
 And awe inspiring!—raising many a thought,
 Solemn, that told of virtues pass'd away— 240
 The revered Founders, who, their earthly coil
 Long had exchanged for heaven. Slowly the king
 Raising his hand, thus to Alswitha spake:
 ‘This is a place of refuge! Joy it yields
 ‘To my distracted mind, to meet a spot 245
 ‘So safe and durable. Alswitha, hear!
 ‘This shall be *thy* abode; while I must haste
 ‘To cot obscure, conceal’d in forest shade,
 ‘Waiting the destin’d time, that shall unfold
 ‘New prospects, and revive our drooping hearts. 250

Alswitha answered, ‘Husband! thou for whom
 ‘My heart has never ceas’d to feel, since first
 ‘From Mercia’s soil I came; oh pity me!
 ‘Nor add a weight too heavy to be borne
 ‘At this hard time. *I*, leave thee, Alfred! leave 255
 ‘My only friend! behold thee go amid
 ‘Ten thousand secret perils, and endure
 ‘That keenest of all ill—uncertainty?
 ‘It cannot be!’

When, earnest, thus the king: 260
 ‘Alswitha! dearly do I hold thy love,
 ‘Thy true affection; dearly do I prize
 ‘Thy presence, but, the thought of self, of joys
 ‘That to myself belong, at hour like this,
 ‘When Britain groans and bleeds, were weak indeed. 265
 ‘I for my people live, and them alone!
 ‘To see their wrongs redress’d, to scourge the Danes,
 ‘To raise again the frightened form of peace,
 ‘And place the crown safe on this infant’s head;
 ‘Who little knows his danger, nor the pangs 270
 ‘That rend his parents! This is my design;

'For this I yield all meaner purposes ;
 'All other dear delights, and, not the least,
 'Thy smiles and counsel.'

Boldly cried the queen, 275

'Uncommon times, demand uncommon deeds,
 'And lofty resolutions. Firm and well
 'Hast thou declared, and truly I revere
 'Thy spirit, unsubdued by time and chance,
 'And all the little storms that vulgar minds 280
 'Toss and o'erwhelm. Thou judgest right, O, king !
 'Go to thy place of hiding ; there behold,
 'Tranquil, the tempest riding high through heaven :
 'Though fierce, it will not always last, and seize
 'The hour of sunshine to come forth and sing 285
 'The song of triumph ; but, regard me, king !
 'I will not leave thee ! I, unmoved, can bear
 'The tempest and the beating wind and rain :
 'These bring no terrors to my heart, I live
 'Beneath thy sight ; away from thee, I die. 290
 'If with vain fear thou shudder at the snares
 'That lurk for woman, I will clothe these limbs
 'In iron-mail, or with the garb of man :
 'And look such terrors to th' obtruding eye,
 'That, aw'd to distance, all alike should mark 295
 'My frown, and tremble. Say not nay, O, king !
 'Beloved friend and husband !'

Alfred cried,

'Thou canst not go with *me* ! I have a path
 'Before me hazardous, of such a kind, 300
 'That man alone can venture. Canst thou climb
 'The mountain precipice, and rob the nest
 'Of eagles⁶⁶ for thy food ? Canst thou contend
 'With prowling wolves, and, on the topmast branch
 'Of lonely tree, watch till returning light, 305
 'Nor dare to dream of hardship ?' Thus the queen,

' Hear thou thy loved Alswitha,—I can climb
 ' The mountain precipice, and rob the nest
 ' Of eagles for my food. I can contend
 ' With prowling wolves, and, on the topmast branch 310
 ' Of lonely tree, watch till returning light,
 ' Nor dare to dream of hardship, if, my lord,
 ' Thy voice I hear, and courage learn from thee !'
 The king replied, while conflict reign'd within.
 ' A heart like thine, firm as the beetling crag, 315
 ' Might dare all perils, and serene look down,
 ' Smiling, while others fear'd ; yet, best beloved !
 ' Hear one objection, sterner than the rest.
 ' If thou canst perils dare— can this thy babe ?'
 Alswitha smote her breast, and answer'd not. 320

Near them, they now behold the Abbey walls,
 Awhile forgotten. Alfred thus : ' 'Tis meet
 ' To pass for trav'lers. Know, yon pious men
 ' Our wants will aid ; and grant asylum fit ⁶⁷
 ' For thee and for thy child.'—They knock. The door 325
 Turns on its ponderous hinges, when the sound
 Rang through the vaulted roof, and forthwith brought
 An aged Father, who inquired the cause
 Of their so early visit. Alfred spake.
 ' Father ! we hither come, to ask thy prayers, 330
 ' And claim thy bounty. We have travelled far,
 ' And, weary, here we stand.'—

The Monk replied,
 ' First follow me, the holy chant to raise,
 ' Then for inferior things.' Him they obey'd, 335
 Following thro' aisles that scarce receiv'd heaven's light,
 Mid shrines and fretted pillars,⁶⁸ till at length
 They came before the altar, canopied
 With broider'd vest,⁶⁹ while dim and glimmering rays,
 From lonely taper, spread o'er all the place 340
 A dubious light, a gloom that to the heart

Convey'd a sudden awe, and many a fear
Doubtful and undefined.

These rites perform'd,

Each to the neighbouring hall repair'd, where stood 345
The liberal table, spread with food and drink,
And all were satisfied. Now to the spot
Where Alfred thoughtful sat, the abbot came,
And, with no rude solicitude, inquired
The cause that made him wander; whence he sped, 350
And whither he was bound, in times like these,
When danger and destruction roam'd abroad.
A good and hospitable man he was;
A smile beneficent beam'd o'er his face,
And his mild accent, so disposed the mind 355
To kindly feelings, and like music soft,
So lull'd the senses, that his words sank deep
Into all strangers' hearts.

Alfred replied,

' Good father I am come, my wife and child, 360
' From a loved home, where peace and plenty reign'd.
' There never pilgrim-monk unheeded ask'd
' For food or shelter; but we left it all,
' Flying before the Danes, whose savage rage
' No power might stand—whose breasts no pity move. 365
' There is no safety now, throughout the land.
' In town and hamlet, pale and troubled forms
' Meet us on every side, aghast! who mourn
' Some friend or relative, untimely slain
' By these fierce Danes—faithless and bloody men!— 370
' May yet the hour arrive, Oh, grant it heaven!
' When wiser Saxons, (now at enmity,
' Whilst foes the while upon their vitals prey,)
' Beholding their delusion, may arise,
' Unite their strength, and with a torrent's force 375
' Sweep Denmark's hordes from this our groaning land.'

' Stranger, thou speakest well,' the abbot cried :

'This is our only hope; and I may say,
 'The day is terrible to every man
 'Who loves his country. Should dissensions still 380
 'Afflict and palsy this our native land;
 'We all must perish! In a few more years
 'No Saxon ⁷⁰ blood will flow, for these fierce Danes
 'Have made a league with death's dark ministers, 385
 'And Alfred strives in vain.—At early morn,
 'At noon, and when the hour of eve draws near,
 'Silent and shivering at the heart, we mark
 'Yon lofty Tor to see if ghastly flames
 'Rise ominous, warning the sea-kings' ⁷¹ march— 390
 'Slaughter before, and fire and waste behind.
 'Hard is our lot, for never lie we down
 'On nightly pillow, but, at sound, or heard
 'Or fancied, we arise and cross our breasts,
 'And listen fearfully, then, sleep again. 395
 'Only to start more terrified. Young man!
 'Thy wish is granted; here contented live
 'And happily; and when thou journeyest hence,
 'May peace go with thee!'

Alfred look'd, and cried, 400

With wonted dignity, 'abbot! thy name?
 When checking soon himself, he humbler spake.
 'I thank thee, father! take a stranger's thanks,
 'His only gift.' The holy man replied,
 'To aid the houseless wanderer, well befits 405
 'The christian ⁷² who has learn'd to imitate—
 'His master, who about went doing good.
 'But what the news thou bring'st? Where are the Danes?
 'If thou hast comfort, cheer our drooping hearts!'
 When Alfred thus: 410

'No comforter am I;

'I mourn to say, it is a wint'ry scene,
 'All bleak and desolate; whilst every house
 'With the white frost is covered. Peace *may* come,

- ' Prosperity *may* shine, but, in an hour 415
 ' When low we lie, for feeble are our hopes,
 ' Declining fast, and a dark veil between :
 ' If safety can be found, this spot is safe,
 ' Wherefore, good father ! I, my earthly all,
 ' This mother and her babe ; heaven's choicest gifts ! 420
 ' Beneath thy roof—thy fostering care, will leave.
 ' Preserve the rich deposit ! To a place,
 ' Distant, I hasten, but the hour draws on,
 ' When with a lighter heart I may return.
 ' 'Tis hard to hope, yet harder to despair.' 425

Throughout the hall, each to his neighbour spake
 As fancy prompted ; but, at Alfred's words,
 The clamour died away, whilst all approach'd
 Successive, to the place, and listen'd, still ;
 And when the king had ceas'd, the abbot cried ; 430

- ' Fear not the enemy ! his reign is short.
 ' Know, gallant stranger ! God will prosper yet
 ' Our good king Alfred. He is wise as brave
 ' Tutor'd in that best school, adversity, ⁷³
 ' And all the hopes of Britain rest alone 435
 ' On him and on high heaven. Dismiss thy fears ;
 ' And if important calls demand thee hence,
 ' Go satisfied, that never mortal trust
 ' This heart betrayed. Safe be thy treasure here,
 ' And safe, tho' perilous, thy journey back ! 440
 ' My blessing shall go with thee.'

Words so kind—

This unexpected praise, this flattering proof
 Of unbought confidence, made the queen's heart,
 Throb fast with gladness—as the king, to earth, 445
 Look'd, whilst conflicting passions shook his frame ;
 Joy, sorrow, hope ; fearing each eye might read
 Upon his cheek his real character.

When thus he answered. 'Sire! the faith thou hast
 'In better days, inspires again my breast; 450
 'And these thy words encourage me. I prize
 'All blessings, but the blessing given by one,
 'Like thee, a *good* man, brings a benefit
 'In after times, as doth the genial shower
 'Bathing the bud of Spring. Father! awhile 455
 'I claim thy patience.'

Alfred now arose.

The queen slow followed him, bearing her child,
 Through where the cloisters stood, and to the trees,
 (Laden with fruit, blithe Avalonia⁷⁴) 460
 Far from obtruding ear. When thus he spake:

'Alswitha! dear art thou! but, thrice more dear
 'For these thy sorrows. Deem me not unkind,
 'In leaving thee 'mid those who little know
 'Thy worth, and thy hard fate; who never felt 465
 'The social tie divine; who never knew
 'A husband's struggles, nor the bitter pang
 'Of separation from that holiest friend—
 'A dear-loved wife. But thou hast that within
 'Which buoys thy spirit; lifts thy soaring mind 470
 'Above the power of circumstance,—thy heart—
 'Teaches to view these shifting scenes of life—
 'Smiling superior.—Do I feign regret
 'At leaving thee 'mid strangers, far from home?—
 'From early friendships, kindred sympathies?' 475
 Silence prevail'd. At length the king pursued;
 'It is most hard! But we shall meet again!
 'Soon will my feet return, and I would hope
 'With tidings, such as thou wilt joy to learn:
 'But, doubt whate'er thou wilt, oh, never doubt 480
 'The pang this parting gives; oh, never doubt
 'Thy husband's true affection.'

Alfred turn'd;

He wept. Alswitha mark'd the tear! a tear
 That on her soul impress'd a character, 485
 Deep, and for ever fresh. Sudden she strove
 To hide the anguish of her breast, and cried,
 (In woman's softest tone!) 'I trust that sigh
 'Came not for me! Oh, do not grieve for me!
 'Beneath this roof, and in this pious place, 490
 'I can live happily, and, tho' thy sight
 'Might cheer my spirit; I, full willingly,
 'That sight can yield, and when thou see'st it right,
 'Doubt not, with winged transport, that thy feet
 'Hither will turn, and thy heart join the heart 495
 'That is alone without thee. Cheer thou up,
 'And rest on heaven, we shall do well again,
 'Both thou and thine.'

Alfred, with transport, cried,
 'Partner in suffering! soothing are thy words! 500
 'Thou dost not know how soothing, at this hour
 'When darkness reigns. Beloved, ere I go
 'Grant me one boon—let me behold thee smile,⁷⁵
 'For wherefore should'st thou grieve, and in thy mind
 'Cherish foreboding sorrow? I must haste 505
 'To gather tidings, but, will soon return,
 'Joy in my eye, and gladness at my heart,
 'And we shall yet exult o'er perils past.'

Alswitha said. 'I hear thy words, O, king!
 'And I should think thee cheerful, but thy face! 510
 'There is the myst'ry! There, thou canst not hide
 'The conflict hard with'in. Yet, was it kind,
 'Thus with mild stratagem, to strive to cheat
 'My heart of anguish, but, in vain! I see
 'Things as they are, and never more expect 515
 'Pleasure on earth. Now, hear me! If thou go,
 'Oh, do not danger court to prove thy strength,
 'Courage, or skill, but when thou seest it,

' Turn off, and think of me. May rivers wide
 ' Stop not thy course ; no savage man approach 520
 ' With dark designs ! no wolf with hideous yell
 ' Draw nigh thee ! May no storms upon thy head
 ' Wrathful, descend ! and, at the hour of sleep,
 ' If hospitable roof be far away,
 ' May some propitious gale, the wither'd leaves, 525
 ' Blow near, and angels guard thee ! '

Alfred now

Viewing his rosy boy, thus mournful spake ;
 ' Mild infant ! thou canst lift thy hands in sport,
 ' And laugh unconscious of the cares that now 530
 ' Oppress thy parents ; but, the hour will come
 ' When these light dreams will vanish ; when thy heart
 ' Will sink within thee, and the passing clouds
 ' Seem leagued against thy peace. Delighted child !
 ' Go on to smile, stretch out thy playful arms 535
 ' In nature's holiday, and chaunt thy song,
 ' Untutor'd—heedless of thy coming wrongs :
 ' But, they will soon draw near. Evil and few
 ' Are man's appointed days, and such indeed
 ' Thy sire has found them. May a double share, 540
 ' His, and thine own, have been his destiny !
 ' Beloved child ! if thou should'st never more
 ' Behold these eyes, nor at a riper age
 ' Receive a father's blessing, may high Heaven
 ' Protect thee ! God of heaven and earth, look down 545
 ' And save my child ! Alswitha ! now, farewell !'
 She sighed, but answered not, and as the King
 Turned to pursue his way, his infant boy,
 With sudden impulse, forward stretched his hands
 And changed from smiles to tears. ' Oh, fare thee well,' 550
 Cried Alfred. ' Fare thee well ! ' when toward the hall,
 Downcast and sad, he walked.

The holy Sire

A cordial had prepared for their return,

With hearty greetings, but, when he beheld
The king alone, he would have asked the cause,
And led him to the feast : but Alfred cried ;

555

‘ My soul is full ! The sun is journeying on,
‘ And I must leave thee ! Grateful is my heart

‘ But it is full, and I can only say,

560

‘ Servant of God ! protect my wife and child !’

This said, he thro’ the lofty gateway pass’d.⁷⁶

A L F R E D :

BOOK IV.

ARGUMENT.

ALFRED in the Cottage of the Neatherd.

AH, who can tell the pangs which Alfred felt,
Whilst wandering slow o'er wilds and desert wastes,
Joyless, and pondering on the weight of ills,
That now o'erwhelmed him ! what his mind endured,
Whose first of earthly hopes, was, to behold 5
His people happy ! while his own great mind
Plann'd for their good, and nursed luxurious thoughts
Of high achievement. He beheld the world
And all the multitude of fellow-men,
Not as an alien. He had learned to weigh 10
What, of the mass of miseries we mourn,
To this our state was needful, what the effect
Of hostile innovation, and he thought,
With fervent joy of all a king might do.
Long had he fed on intellectual food : 15
The love of Nature and of nature's God
Had harmonized his spirit, he had felt
His heart attuned to love.

At evening hour,
In the warm summer months, while yet a boy, 20

Oft would he wander by the slow brook's side,
 And mark its gentle noise, serving to break
 Th' intensity of silence which oppressed
 His listening sense, and gave to all around
 New and obscure solemnity. 25

His heart,

Susceptible of shadows, forms, and things
 Which pass th' unthinking by, intensely pored,
 Now on itself; and now, excursive, roam'd
 O'er shapes material; viewing with delight 30
 Beauty transcendent, God's omnipotence,
 Traced with imperishable characters,
 Alike, on all that is. Whilst musing thus,
 Each object—whether such as live their hour
 Upon this teeming earth, then die away, 35
 Or those sublime and everlasting forms
 That throng heaven's concave—sun, and moon, and stars,
 Each, to his ear, spake audibly. He saw
 Divinity in all things, and adored,
 With the enthusiast's rapt and ardent mind, 40
 The glorious hosts of heaven, the clouds of night,
 Morn's rich effulgence, with the seasons fair,
 Diversly dress'd, and scattering as they dance,
 Entwined, through æther, blessings infinite,
 Oppressive with all good. 45

Whilst musing thus,

Gazing on lordly man, who would confine
 Heaven's weight of care, to his own pamper'd self,
 Oft he exclaimed, ' Whence came the monster, Pride?
 ' Didst thou, vain mortal! catch thy haughty mien 50
 ' From scenes like these, and fancy that the light
 ' Of the fair morning beam'd alone on thee?
 ' For thee the skylark sung, the breeze awoke
 ' Burdened with fragrance, and around thy head
 ' Wanton'd in servile dalliance?—Spirits vile 55
 ' May, in the turmoil of this world, assault

' Oft-times our peace, but he who Nature loves,
 ' And in the beauty of creation feels
 ' His heart immersed ; who views th' Almighty Hand,
 ' Upholding, what Omnipotence first formed— 60
 ' The world, and all its hosts of shapes and things,
 ' Retiring to his own capacious mind,
 ' Will hear the storm without, and calmly say,
 ' These move me not.'

Now pondering on mankind— 65

(Error's dark reign, and tyranny's mad deeds)
 With stern prophetic spirit, hear him cry,
 ' Nor shall our race pass to the goal of time,
 ' Still hoping from futurity, the joys,
 ' E'en now within their grasp ; the day shall come 70
 ' When evils and oppressions infinite
 ' Which we have borne, groaning beneath their weight,
 ' Our wiser sons shall hear of, as a tale,
 ' Discredited, that casts inglorious shade
 ' O'er their brave ancestors. The sun shall burst, 75
 ' Enthroned in brighter splendours, and survey
 ' Regenerated man, rising sublime
 ' From the wide sea of prejudice, the gulf
 ' Of stormy superstition, that consumes
 ' The fettered intellect, and sinks Heaven's work, 80
 ' First of material order, to the low
 ' And perishable insect of a day.' "

With thoughts like these, familiar had he grown.
 From the young dawn of reason he had plann'd
 (If e'er the hour arrived that gave a crown) 85
 Deeds, whose august reality should scoff
 Dull Calculation, and to all display
 What good the Great might do. But, royalty
 Now came, and, with it, cares, whose crushing load
 Bent him to earth, and made him fear the hopes 90
 That once inspired him in life's sunny morn,

Would die away, like the first summer fruits
 That just put on their bloom, when suddenly
 The north-wind comes, and the dark veil of night
 Casts o'er their early charms. 95

Wearied at heart,

Rememb'ring each anticipated joy,
 The King now stray'd alone, unknowing where ;
 O'er trackless wilds, where seldom human foot
 Had mark'd the ground. His parted loaf was gone : 100
 The berries of the wilderness assuaged
 Oft-times his hunger, whilst the springs that gave—
 Their noiseless stream, and roll'd between the hills,
 Making the green grass greener, now had flown,
 And left him,— prey to that worst misery,— 105
 Thirst ; for in vain he seeks the cooling draught ;—
 Enduring the parched tongue. His anxious look
 Full oft reverted from the drooping flags
 Grown grey in sunshine, whose forbidding hues
 Restrained approach, and made the hurrying foot 110
 Stand still, the eye turn off to other scenes,
 The heart, to other hopes. Warm was the day,
 When Alfred, weary with the tedious search
 Of some clear spring's invigorating power,
 Felt fatal langour stealing o'er his frame. 115

With light green leaf, rising o'er Winter's spoils,
 Russet and brown, the gorse and fern were near,
 And farther off, and far as he could see,
 Blended with moss, and thorn, and sedgy grass,
 With many a little plat of pasture fair 120
 Opening between. Alfred in thoughtful mood,
 Still onward sped, oppress'd by growing care,
 Save when the warbling tenants of the wild,
 Upstarting, gave to sad perplexity
 Short respite. Many a fitful glance he cast 125
 Of weary expectation o'er the heath,

Which seemed from each small eminence to spread
 Wider its dreary reign. The King at length
 Opprest and weary, lost amid the waste
 Of endless desolation, felt his heart ⁷⁸ 130
 For death prepared. He stood, and like the man
 Who travels far, that calls his house, and takes
 A parting leave, and with soft accent says,
 To some, perchance, who little kindness knew,
 ‘Farewell, my friends!’ so Alfred look’d around 135
 On all his mute companions—fern and heath,
 And feebly cried—‘Farewell!’

When, by his road

Appear’d a figure, stretch’d upon the earth,
 Of human shape. He hastens to the spot : 140
 Trembling he saw!—It was old Nidor, dead!—
 The aged Beggar. In one hand he held
 His wallet empty, whilst beside him lay
 A broken crutch!—‘Poor, miserable man!’
 Alfred exclaim’d. ‘Had this my arm been near, 145
 ‘Thou hadst not perished.’ Silent he beheld,
 Heaving the prayer to Heaven; then, passed away,
 Musing on that impenetrable veil
 That hides the future, screening many a gulf
 From easy man, who unconcern’d looks on 150
 To coming pleasures, when Death, unawares,
 Sends him to dwell with blank forgetfulness.

Now sudden thoughts arose in Alfred’s mind
 Of those who never more might hear *his* fate.
 He thought upon Alswitha, on his child— 155
 His subjects, scatter’d o’er the ravaged land.
 Far on his way he gaz’d, tho’ hopeless. Sounds
 And moving forms were none. It was a calm
 So dead and so terrific that the world
 Seem’d shadows, and all life extinct and gone. 160
 When, lo! a drove of horses wild appear’d,

Far in the distance, that with speed approach'd,
 And to a neighbouring dell rush'd down. The sight
 From his distracting cares aroused the King;
 When hastening to the brow, what fervent bliss 165
 Swept through his bosom, when beneath, he saw,
 Catching the sun's last radiance, a fair brook,
 By whose green side the wild-hoof'd horses drank!

Thither he hastes, and copious draughts he drinks
 At that pure stream. A sudden power, unknown, 170
 Seem'd instant to pervade his frame; a power,
 A spirit that infused new faculties. A vale
 Now met his eye, a fair and woody vale,
 Till then unmark'd, that round the barren hill
 Spread its luxuriant verdure, and the stream, 175
 Slow gliding on.

Alfred beside the brook

Pass'd earnest, for the eve was drawing near,
 And he had hoped, before another sun
 Sank in the crimson west, to rest his head 180
 Beneath some humble dwelling; but, in vain,
 For fast the shadows fell, and it was night.

The stream grew larger, by whose rushy side,
 The King press'd on: but still no house appear'd.
 What means that light he cried, as thro' the trees 185
 'A vivid beam it cast?—It vanishes!
 'Ah, cruel foe!' he said. 'Tempt not my feet!
 'Thou art no restless sprite, but that sad fire,
 'O'er moor and mountain fen, with giddy dance
 'Luring to death the wilder'd traveller. 190
 'Here will I rest awhile, beneath Heaven's care,
 'These reeds my pillow:' when the king lay down,
 And peaceful were the slumbers of the night.

The morning sun, magnificent, now rose, 195

Sending his red and winged harbingers,
 Mantled in glory, to illume new climes,
 And rouse new hearts, while heaven's wide concave glow'd
 Intenser, as the Lord of Day advanced.
 Alfred, encircled with the blaze, upsprang, 200
 Shaking the drowsy feeling from his brain,
 For he alone seem'd senseless, whilst, around,
 All nature teem'd with life.

Wondering, he saw,

Where, on the eve, the doubtful light had shone, 205
 A green-roof'd cottage, deep embower'd in trees,
 Whose guardian arms encircled it, and spread,
 On every side, voluptuous foliage, gay ;
 While round the sylvan dwelling, many a branch,
 High over head, quick-wavering, strove 210
 To hide th' azure sky, that here and there,
 Struggled to pour its splendours on the sight.
 Alfred beheld the cottage and exclaimed,
 ' In spot like this, Ambition might grow wise.
 ' Be this my home. Here will I rest awhile, 215
 ' Secure and peaceful, striving to forget
 ' A little space, the cares of royalty.'
 When he approach'd and knock'd,

A voice within,

In shrill and fretful tone inquires the cause ; 220
 When to the door a woman came and cried,
 ' What led thee hither, man ? Whom seekest thou ?'
 ' I ask for bread,' said Alfred ; ' long, these feet
 ' Have toiled o'er barren hill, and dreary moor,
 ' Nor have I tasted food, save here and there 225
 ' Some scattered berries. Give thy suppliant bread,
 ' And let him dwell awhile beneath thy roof :
 ' What service in return these hands can do,
 ' Shall be well done, and cheerfully.'—Aloud—
 The woman answer'd, ' Ill can I provide 230
 ' For others' wants ; I have a host myself ;

' Yet as a houseless and deserted man,
 ' I will not spurn thee. Here shalt thou remain
 ' Two only days ;⁷⁹ we cannot feed thee more,
 ' For ACCA, and CEOLRIC earn with toil 235
 ' Their daily bread.'

' Hast thou no constant work
 ' For one who well will serve thee ?' Alfred said.
 ' None,' she replied. ' But what canst thou perform ?
 ' Can'st fell a tree ?' The monarch looks demure. 240
 Acca inquired, ' Can'st mend the fishing net ?—
 ' Or build a hut, or shed ? or shape the thong ?⁸⁰
 ' Neither,' the king replied, ' but I have heart,
 ' And will, to serve thee, in what way I can.'
 ' But what way is't ?' said Acca, ' can'st thou sow ?' 245
 ' Or reap ? or milk the kine ? or use the spade ?'
 ' Neither,' the king replied, ' but I can learn.'
 Said Acca, ' Learn !—thou art a helpless drone,
 ' Where hast thou lived ? Can'st spin ? or shear the sheep ?
 ' Or rear the faggot pile ? Can'st carry wood ?'— 250
 ' Aye, that I *can* do,' cried the king, with joy ;
 ' For I have strength to spare.' ' Well, take thy food,'
 Frowning, the housewife cried, ' and mind my words,
 ' Whate'er I tell thee, or, the penalty,
 ' My anger, thou shalt know.' 255

Here many a day,
 Toiling the king abode, and nobler heap
 Of turf or stubble, never from the fields
 Was borne by mortal man, than Alfred bore.
 Yet ill, the king discharged his servitude ; 260
 His busy fancy ran, o'er coming years,
 Upon his subjects' wrongs, and on the means
 Best suited to support a tottering crown.
 Acca perceiv'd full oft the wayward man
 Pursuing fancies wild, indifferent grown, 265
 To each accustomed charge of household sort,
 Her great concern ; and often, bitter words

Heap'd she, and hard reproaches, till at length
 Her voice grew louder, when, the cottage door
 Burst open, and the master entered in,— 270
 Ceolric. 'Wife! what moves thy wrath?' he cried.
 'Whom hast thou 'neath our roof? I know him not.'
 When, turning to the king, he view'd him well.

Acca replied, 'It is a friendless man
 'Who sought our dwelling, and petition'd hard, 275
 'For food and service in thy absence. I,
 'Too readily by pity borne away!
 '(Fault of my easy nature) stood and heard
 'His mournful tale, who having promised fair
 'To do the servant's part, him I received; 280
 'But never came beneath a door, a man
 'More thoughtless, or perversely bent on dreams
 'Bewildering. Many an hour he sits and hums
 'About one Cædman,⁸¹ and then stops and frowns
 'At something in the air; then rises up, 285
 'And walks with stately mien, then sits again,
 'And shaves his bow, or with more furious eye,
 'Gazes in vacancy. In truth I think
 'The man half mad, for not an hour ago,
 'The household cakes that yonder lie, half burnt, 290
 'And smoking on the hearth, I to him gave,
 'And with strict charge, and caution often told,
 'Warn'd him to turn, and with due care preserve
 'From scorching heat; then to the fields I sped
 'To tend the kine; and now again return'd; 295
 'When, as the door I opened and look'd round;
 'Unmindful, on his chair he sat, his eyes
 'Fix'd on the floor, his knife beside, while near
 'Lay many a half-form'd bow. But, sad to tell!
 'My cakes, for thy return, prepared to shew 300
 'A wife's affection, lay involv'd in smoke;
 'Now nothing worth; and this strange loon at hand,

‘Regardless. Dost thou hear?’ she cried,
 And stamp’d her foot, and with indignant ire,
 Vow’d oft and bitterly, no other food 305
 Should he receive, till he had eaten all
 The black—burnt cakes.⁸²

Ceolric thus replied :

‘Heed not the cakes. It was a small mishap.
 ‘The young man has the look of honesty, 310
 ‘And soon will mend. But, wife, hast heard the news?’
 ‘The news! What news:’ eager, she answer made.
 ‘News that will make thee mourn,’ Ceolric said,
 ‘Why, Glastonbury!’ ‘Glastonbury!’ cried
 Alfred uprising, ‘What of that?’ ‘Young man,⁸³ 315
 ‘Mind thou thy work,’ said Acca. ‘Mind thy work!
 ‘But husband, what of Glastonbury? say!’
 In mournful tones, he thus the answer gave.
 ‘The Danes with wrath have deluged it, and made
 ‘That comely pile a ruin.⁸⁴ Acca turned 320
 To Alfred near, and said, ‘Why tremblest thou?
 ‘But, husband, speak thou on—he thus pursued.
 ‘Oh, woe for England! That surpassing pile
 ‘Is now in ashes! all the pious monks
 ‘There, have been murdered! scarce one stone remains, 325
 ‘And fast the Danes march on and devastate
 ‘With undistinguish’d fury. Now I see
 ‘The end of Britain coming. ‘Tis an hour
 ‘That tries the strongest heart, and makes us know
 ‘What terror means. So seldom do I meet 330
 ‘A Saxon, that, in truth, it is a sight
 ‘That soothes my heart. Come cheer thou up, young man;
 (Turning to Alfred, thus Ceolric spake.)
 ‘No doubt with us and all of Saxon blood,
 ‘Thou, too, hast suffer’d from these Danes, that spare 335
 ‘Nor age, nor sex. Awhile forget thy cares :
 ‘Welcome to this our dwelling : when the foe
 ‘Thus wage their warfare, Saxon should behold

'A brother's face in Saxon.' Thus again
 Spake, tremblingly, the Neatherd, 340
 'Yester eve
 'I met a man fast flying, wild of look,
 'O'er yonder hill. He told me many a tale
 'Of Danish wrath, and Danish cruelty,
 'But one that made my big heart leap again. 345
 'Thou'st heard of Oddune! that brave general ;'
 (Alfred look'd up) 'A nobler man ne'er met
 'Upon the field of fight, and measured swords,
 'Or cast the lance or dart. He lately came
 'Down to the West to seek his fortunes there, 350
 'And serve his monarch. Many a fearless youth
 'Him follow'd to the war, 'till soon he saw
 'A hopeful band of warriors, bold and true,
 'Aiding his cause; but, Acca, mark me well;
 'Scarce had he rais'd this gallant troop, and fired 355
 'Each heart with patriot ardour, when the news
 'That Hubba, with his army, near was found.
 'In this distracting hour short time was left
 'For consultation, and they instant march'd
 'To Kenwith's neighbouring castle⁸⁵ There they are 360
 'By foes encompass'd. Lofty is the pile;
 'Firm built and massy, and a braver man
 'To bid defiance, never javelin hurl'd
 'From battlement or tower. A noble Thane,⁸⁶
 'God prosper him, and send him quick relief!— 365
 'Two armies westward roam. One Hubba leads,
 'Guthrum the other. From the ruin'd walls
 'Of Glastonbury, fast the former hies
 'To join proud Guthrum, scattering far and wide
 'Death and destruction.' 370
 'If he take that course,'
 Cried Acca, trembling, 'think of thy good sire—
 'Exposed and helpless! What will now become,
 'Of poor old *Nidor*?' Thus Ceolric spake.

' My aged father ! God, I pray, from harm
 ' Will screen thy wither'd limbs ! I trust, no Danes
 ' May find thee, O my father !—Our two sons, 375
 ' (This comfort still is ours) with loyal hearts—
 ' Follow our gallant monarch, whom we sent
 ' No labour'd task, to join his fortunes ; they,
 ' Brave youths ! are gone, and little do we know
 ' How hard they fare.' 380

Said Acca, ' What an hour—

' We live in, and what dangers crowd around.
 ' My head is weary with the toil of hope,
 ' Whilst fears successive revel in my breast,
 ' And fast consume me. ' Mid such direful scenes, 385
 ' Sorrow befits me well, yet, every hour
 ' Makes me more callous ; I shall soon become
 ' Heedless of all things, for my heart seems changed.
 ' I *would*, but *cannot* feel. Thy aged sire,
 ' Whom I so used to love, is now no more 390
 ' Than tale forgotten. Nay, I almost doubt
 ' My recollection : never could this mind
 ' Have known such deep affection for those youths,
 ' And that old man.'—

Ceolric thus : ' My wife, 395

' It is a bitter time for thee and me,
 ' But what are our dismays, compared with his—
 ' Our good king Alfred ? Think what he endures,
 ' That injured prince ; the noblest, best of men.
 ' His heart is tender, and he calls his own, 400
 ' All virtues and all trials. Think of him,
 ' Driven from his father's throne, and forced to see
 ' Himself to death devoted, and his queen,
 ' And infant child, houseless and wanting bread :
 ' Think of thy Prince ! ' 405

' I feel at these thy words

' Calmness within ; ' cried Acca. ' Hast thou heard,
 ' Since last we parted, tidings of our King ? '

The Neatherd thus. 'Dishearten'd now he dwells
 'With a few faithful men, 'mid rocks, and woods, 410
 'And secret caverns, loan and dreary wastes,
 'Far from all human dwelling. What a joy,
 'For thee and me, that at this trying time
 'Our sons are with him, and a bolder pair
 'Of rustic Saxons, live not to oppose 415
 'The robber Danes.' 'Now is it time to rest,'
 Acca replied, 'for fast the sun declines ;
 'And tho' we fail to sleep, 'tis well to court
 'That soother of all sorrow.—To thy room !'
 Loud, to the king, she spake. He heard, when all 420
 Passed to their reeden beds.⁸⁷

But Alfred's eye
 No slumber visited. He watch'd the moon,
 And counted o'er the brightest of the stars
 That shone in heaven, and strove to dissipate 425
 The ponderous load that on his heart press'd hard ;
 But it was vain : his many woes sprang up,
 Preeminent, and dared his will, and bore
 A master's sway—ruling his passive mind.
 His faithful Oddune, compass'd round, and now, 430
 No force to aid him. Of Alswitha slain !—
 For ever gone ! and of his infant son,
 Toss'd haply on the hostile spear, ⁸⁸ whose cries
 'No father's arm might succour. 'Tis a voice
 'That speaks in thunder,' cried the king, 'my breast 435
 'Glow's with one purpose. By the eternal God !
 'My heart is roused. The Danish cup is full ;
 'The incense of their crimes hath steam'd aloft,
 'And heaven demands my vengeance !' Many plans
 All deadly, to and fro, through Alfred's mind 440
 Pass'd rapid ; till, at length, a heavy sleep
 Fell on him, and his dreams were mixed with blood.

ALFRED:

BOOK V.

ARGUMENT.

Continuation of Alfred in the cottage of the Neatherd.

At morn's first gleam, up from his lowly couch
The king arose, but not to joyousness :
Before reflection cleared his intellect
He felt a load press heavy. Memory soon
Laid bare the cause, whilst horror reign'd within. 5
He look'd abroad. Far as the eye might reach
Cloud heap'd on cloud, spread thro' the concave dark ;
Like mountains, hurrying from the burden'd west,
Borne on the furious winds, that onward burst
In fitful gusts, and in their eddying rage 10
Reveal'd the power of elemental strife.
Cessation none. Careering still, they bear
With lawless fury, clouds of deeper dye
That scare the soul, and rouse mysterious fears
Of what might be. 15

Alfred around him gazed,
O'erwhelmed with cares that press'd him to the earth.
To Fancy's eye, it seem'd th' appointed hour
When Melancholy, 'throned in ebon state,
Claim'd homage of mankind. Each form around 20

Felt with himself deep sympathy. The fields
 All grey appear'd. The hills were veil'd in mist ;
 Whilst to obstruct each avenue of joy,
 Creation, with no early matin song,
 Regaled the ear, for not a voice was heard 25
 Save of the lonely rook, that, sailing fast
 On the loud tempest, caw'd, then pass'd away,
 Sudden, before the fury of the blast—
 Tossing the forest near.

He now retired 30
 To contemplate a scene more desolate—
 His own distracted mind. Resolve was there,
 But how, or when to execute, unknown.
 He rose, and 'mid the conflict, once again
 Acted the servant's part. 35

It was the time
 When the first meal began. Ceolric sat
 By the clean hearth, ⁸⁹ and, gazing at the sky,
 To Acca thus. 'It is a direful morn,
 'And fast and heavily the rain descends ; 40
 'The tempest,—hear its sound ! How sad to roam,
 'At such an hour, o'er the drear wilderness
 'Which bosoms our low cot. It gives me cheer
 'That I have pass'd its confines. Now, the storm,
 'And this out-pouring sky, the more endears 45
 'Domestic comfort.'—

Scarce had he declared,
 When to the door there came a warrior man,
 Clad in bright armour. In his hands he held,
 Dripping with rain, a child. He entered in, 50
 Whilst strange astonishment the master fills,
 And Acca wonders, silent.—

'Here I am,
 'Thank God,' cried SIGBERT ! Alfred saw the child,—
 It was his own ! Grateful he look'd to heaven, 55
 And with ejaculation, mute, retired.

Ceolric thus the armed man addressed.

‘What seek’st thou here? bold stranger! We are poor;
 ‘Yet, what thou needest, thou shalt have, and that 60
 ‘Right willingly.’ When Acca thus exclaim’d
 ‘But, whence this child, forlorn and destitute?
 ‘It is a beauteous boy, with angel smile.
 ‘Meek, innocent! I will relieve thy wants.’⁹⁰
 ‘But wherefore didst thou bring,’ again she cried, 65
 ‘This infant in so rude an hour, ’mid rain
 ‘And the loud tempest?’ As she took the child
 And press’d it to her bosom.

‘I have long,’

Cried Sigbert, ‘been in search of our good king, 70
 ‘To bear him tidings of brave Oddune’s fate,
 ‘Beleager’d round in Kenwith, by the Danes;
 ‘Those demon men! but nothing can I learn.
 ‘He wanders now o’er moors, or hides himself
 ‘’Mid clefts of rock, far from all human search. 75
 ‘His subjects, (whom at midnight oft I curse)
 ‘By their distractions and base cowardice,
 ‘Have hurried to despair the best of kings.
 ‘I fear me bitterly some savage beast’⁹¹
 ‘Hath harm’d our monarch, for on yonder heath 80
 ‘I found his well-known mantle; see it here.
 ‘It is not smear’d with blood, yet how his garb
 ‘Should rest upon the ground, in such a place,
 ‘No tongue may tell. If, by high heaven ordain’d,
 ‘Evil hath lighted on our king, what fate— 85
 ‘Then waits for Saxons, sunk, dispirited,
 ‘It were not hard to say.’ ‘Oh woeful thought!’
 Cried Acca, ‘Alfred hath all prayers. His sword,
 ‘Next after God, we trust in; but declare
 ‘How cam’st thou by this child, this lovely child, 90
 ‘That smiles on all, diverted, and looks up
 ‘With such calm sweetness?’

Sigbert thus replied :

' Whilst wandering o'er yon heath, in toilsome search
 ' Of Alfred, our good king, to bear him tidings, 95
 ' Of Kenwith, and his friends, a piteous cry
 ' Pierced through my ears : turning, I near espied
 ' A murder'd monk, (for whom no bell ^{was} hath toll'd !)
 ' And underneath his cloak this infant boy.
 ' His face was pale with fasting, and his cheek 100
 ' Still wet with tears. His little arms he stretch'd,
 ' At sight of me ; and, though I was alone,
 ' I could as soon have laid mine own head down,
 ' And there have died, as left this lovely babe.
 ' I rais'd him up, and to my bosom warm, 105
 ' Press'd his cold limbs. Anon he look'd, and smiled.
 ' Poor helpless babe ! thus orphan'd, I will joy
 ' To be thy foster-father ; thou shalt live
 ' Henceforth with me, and still participate
 ' In all I have of this world's happiness.' 110

When Acca broke the silence, ' Warrior bold,
 ' I cannot stand and ponder, I must speak,
 ' And praise thee for thy goodness, thus to aid
 ' A wretched infant, and 'mid storms like these,
 ' To bear him to our cot. It was most brave ; 115
 ' I laud thee for it, and if wealth were mine,
 ' Or honors, thou should'st be the noblest man
 ' Britain can boast, aye and the wealthiest too.'—
 Replied the warrior. ' Woeful was the sight
 ' Of that poor murder'd man upon the heath. 120
 ' So dread the look of death, I never saw.
 ' His limbs ! and then his head ! My very sight,
 ' I question'd, when I saw the helpless babe,
 ' And thought that *life* could never sojourn near
 ' A scene so dread.' 125

Faintly, thus Alfred ask'd,
 ' Was there no mother near ? ' Sigbert exclaim'd,
 ' Regard thy work, young man ! holding thy peace :

'It suits *thee* to be silent.' When he turn'd
 To Acca and Ceolric, and exclaimed, 130
 'Wherefore thus harbour one so stout of limb?
 'It doth impeach your loyalty. He now
 'Should be in battle, fighting for his king.
 'Had every man like him, once started up
 'At sound of danger, and in concert join'd 135
 'To meet our furious enemies, and check
 'Their savage progress; how should we have leap'd
 'To see their mangled and bare carcasses,
 'Courting the raven's beak; but, dastard minds,
 'Like his, have shrunk from danger, and exposed 140
 'Our valiant prince, and kingdom, to the Danes,
 'And their fierce ravage.' Turning to the king,
 'Haste, coward!' he exclaim'd! 'This moment haste,
 'And join the Saxons! Meet the Danish brood,
 'And beat them with o'erwhelming wrath to earth, 145
 'Disdaining mercy; or this sword shall, hence
 'Drive thee, Oh, heartless traitor!'

Alfred heard;

Then left his homely toil, and forward walked
 Stately, to meet the warrior, when he cried, 150
 'Sigbert!' and look'd majestic. The chief
 One moment frown'd; when, pallid turn'd his cheek;
 He felt distraction, and, that instant sank
 Speechless upon his knee. Him, Alfred rais'd,
 And forth conducted to a grove of firs, 155
 Secure and silent—when he thus began:

'Thou seest me, Sigbert! not as heretofore
 'Wessex's high Potentate, but, thus reduced
 'To menial service. In this guise, I am, 160
 'Hanging on fortune; but the time is come,
 'When other scenes await me. I must now
 'Go forth to conquer, or, for ever close
 'These eyes in death. The day, the hour is come,

' When Saxons in their might, once more must rise
 ' Superior to misfortune ;—must arrest 165
 ' The impious foe, and, fearless, vindicate
 ' Their country's ancient glory. I sustain
 ' Sorrows, and complicated woes, too great !—
 ' Presumptuous thought ! High Heaven administers,
 ' In weight and measure, all the ills of man. 170
 ' O, Sigbert ! in an evil hour I left
 ' Alswitha, and my child, my pride, my boy,
 ' In Glastonbury ! now, the passing gale
 ' Sweeps o'er its smoking ruins ! The fierce Danes
 ' Have rased its deep foundations !⁹³ She was there, 175
 ' And, 'mid the slaughter, fell !' Awhile he paus'd,
 Then thus continued : ' Sigbert, hear thy prince !
 ' The child thou saw'st, crying beside the monk,
 ' That very child whom thou hast hither brought
 ' From yonder heath, is mine, my infant boy ! 180
 ' Thy hands have saved him ; but that other loss
 ' How shall I bear its weight ? Her last fond look
 ' Thus seem'd to say, ' Alfred a long farewell !'
 ' I never more shall see her,—she is gone !—
 ' Gone down to death !' 185

A silence mark'd the air.

Again the Monarch. ' Sigbert ! clouds and night
 ' Hang over us ! my fallen queen I mourn ;
 ' My friends, now friends no more, but above all,
 ' My country, of distemper sick, that needs 190
 ' The boldest remedy. Soon shall this arm,
 ' No more restrain'd, upon the pitiless Danes
 ' Heaven's hottest vengeance shower. Their cup is full.
 ' Despair, avaunt ! I have a lion's heart,
 ' And, lo ! I pant for conflict !'— 195

Then the thought—

Of his loved queen, swept through his anguish'd mind,
 Trembling again he spake, ' I must awhile,
 ' Sheath this my sword, and first, Alswitha seek,

'Tho' fall'n and perish'd. I must find her corse,
'The decent earth shall cover her loved form !' 200

When Sigbert thus. 'O, best of kings ! behold
'Thy prostrate servant ! self-accused and wild,
'That he should thus address thee ; thus abuse
'Thy patient virtues. Pardon me, O, king ! 205
'And if thou dost not hate me, tell me so.'

Alfred replied. 'I do indeed, not hate,
'But rather love thee, Sigbert. Thou didst talk
'Like honest freedom in an honest cause :
'Thou thoughtest me a recreant from thy king, 210
'And spakedst boldly to me. Had all men
'Thy zeal inherited, far other scenes
'Would now await us.'—Sigbert, earnest cried ;
'Illustrious prince ! ordained to shew mankind
'All that is just in thought, in sufferance great, 215
'Regard thy servant's words ! A holy joy,
'That, at my latest hour, shall make my heart
'Leap, and with life be satisfied, is this,
'That I was doom'd by Providence to find
'Thy infant child, and bear him in my arms 220
'To place of safety. Now, one hope remains,
'That thou wilt let *me* seek Alswitha's fate.
'St. Alban⁹⁴ and good angels be my guide !'

Yielding to duty, what affection claim'd,
'Go,' Alfred cried. 'Tho' of Alswitha's fate 225
'Folly it were to doubt, to madness kin,
'Yet haply thou may'st learn some circumstance,
'Touching her end, that from my breast may drive—
'That deadliest of all foes—uncertainty.
'Speed on thy way ! Meantime thy king will haste 230
(Aroused by duty, and the sense of wrong,)
'To Selwood, seek his troops, and arm their breasts

' With aggravated wrath, then lead them forth,
 ' First, Oddune to release. His force with mine,
 ' All valiant spirits, will a host present, 235
 ' Augmented by bold spirits from the West,
 (' Nor least from *Brystoe*,⁹⁶ that illustrious town,
 ' No longer branded, ' slave-mart, lost to shame !'
 ' But famed for valour, worth, and loyalty,
 ' Thro' which Sabrina's rock-bound daughter flows ; 240
 ' Gem of our Isle, and pride of Wessex-land.)
 ' Thus, with our force united, we will meet,
 ' Fearless, the Danes, and, in our potency,
 (' If Heaven at length should prosper with his smile)
 ' Drive them, with might resistless from our soil. 245
 ' No idle words be ours.'—Sigbert his sword⁹⁶
 More firmly girt, and thus to Alfred spake :
 ' Here, take thy garment ! Look thyself once more !
 ' O king, I leave thee. All that man can do, 250
 ' Expect from Sigbert.—Till we meet again,
 ' Heaven guard thy head !'

Never such doubts, and fears,
 And sore perplexities, on man had prey'd,
 As felt the cottagers, when they beheld— 255
 So strange to sight,—their servant dauntless stand
 Before the warrior, who, with sudden dread,
 Bent on his knee, and trembled, whilst the man,
 Self-confident, lead, with commanding air
 And aspect bold, to the near grove of firs, 260
 The armed chief, so terrible. They gazed,
 Astonish'd, when Ceolric thus bespake.

' It is a sight, which makes my teeth and knees
 ' Chatter and shake. Whom think'st thou is our man,
 ' That thus the warrior bold should look amazed, 265
 ' Kneeling in terror ? Hast thou never heard
 ' Of spirits that assume our outward form,
 ' And do the work of mortals ?—come and go

' Unshackled by this earthly tenement ?
 ' The wond'rous deed doth so confuse my mind, 270
 ' That scarcely I can act, or speak, or think,
 ' As I was wont to do. Whence came he first ? '
 Acca again repeated her first tale,
 How that he asked for bread, and pleaded hard
 To stay and rest himself, and do the work 275
 Of faithful servant. ' But, I think,' she cried,
 ' His eye betray'd dark meaning, for I strove
 ' Forward to send him, but his winning speech
 ' So on me wrought, that I could only say,
 ' Come in ! I had no other power, and thus 280
 ' The man came in : but, now it strikes my mind,
 ' His gait, and attitude ! and his wild looks,
 ' And manner ! 'Tis a wicked sprite ! And then,
 ' The warrior ! Didst thou touch him, husband ? why—
 ' That look of terror ? Comfort me and say 285
 ' That *thou* art not a spirit ! for my brain
 ' Swims with uncertainty ? '

In doubts like these,

The time pass'd on, when, at the cottage door
 Alfred appear'd. That moment Acca shriek'd, 290
 Whilst trembling stood Ceolric, whose pale lips
 Mutter'd the broken prayer. Awhile the king—
 Gazed round in wonderment. The sudden change
 He wist not what it meant, and drawing near
 Said slowly, ' Friends ! whence this surprise and dread ? 295
 ' Fear you your servant ? '—From a neighbouring couch
 The babe then saw its father, whose fresh dress
 It knew full well, and stretch'd his infant arms
 With eager joy, when Alfred sprang, and cried 300
 ' My boy ! My boy ! ' and press'd him to his heart.—
 The new and sudden transport of the man
 Who call'd the child *his* boy, a deeper shade
 Cast o'er the neatherd's mind ; who now dismiss'd
 His former apprehensions, and thus spake, 305

' Good friend, I know thee not, thy name, nor state,
 ' Thus veil'd in humble garb, yet now I think
 ' That thou art one of noble blood, and born
 ' To honors, such as we can ill bestow :
 ' Declare thy name and character !' 310

The king

Look'd mild and said. ' Neatherd ; howe'er it seem,
 ' Know that myself am ALFRED !' Wild dismay
 Rush'd through Ceolric's mind. He gazed on earth—
 Silent, when Acca to the king approach'd : 315

She stood, and would have spoken, but her tongue
 Refused its office. Alfred thus again :
 ' Behold in me your friend !' When Acca cried.

' Art *thou* our king ? and this forsaken child
 ' Our noble prince, prince Edward ? Now, 320

' My death approaches ! I have seen enough !
 ' What ! *thou* our brave king Alfred ? *thou*, the man,
 ' Whom I have cross'd, unwittingly ?—deny'd,
 ' To this our cot, admission ? Can it be,
 ' That I should thus rebuke the best of kings, 325

' And he forgive me ?' Alfred answer'd—' Yea,
 ' I do forgive thee ! Thou hast shelter given
 ' To one—a dreaming man, whose wilder'd mind
 ' Left thy concerns, and wander'd far away :
 ' Whither thou little knew'st ! yet didst thou bear 330

' With all his waywardness. But, had thy wrath
 ' Sounded eternal like the troubled brook,
 ' That deed would cancel all, when thou didst take
 ' My starving infant and communicate
 ' Food and kind warmth, whilst I his father stood 335

' And heard thee comfort him, beheld thee press
 ' His shivering hands close to thy breast, and tell
 ' Of his calm sweetness. Then my grateful heart
 ' Vow'd lasting kindness. View in me thy friend !

Alfred now call'd the neatherd and thus spake : 340

' I deem'd it wise to stray, remote from those
 ' Who knew and who revered me, that my mind
 ' Might ponder on the steep and rugged path
 ' That lay before ; yet, chiefly, to arouse
 ' My sleeping subjects, and inspire their souls 345
 ' With one resolve—to triumph o'er the Danes,
 ' Or, nobly perish. After wandering far
 ' O'er trackless deserts, and enduring oft
 ' Hunger, and cold, and peril ; here at length
 ' I found a refuge ; waiting till some hour 350
 ' Of clear and certain meaning call'd me hence :
 ' That hour is come ! for Oddune, my brave friend,
 ' Now sighs in vain for succour, 'mid the walls
 ' Of Kenwith's castle. Neatherd, hear thy prince.
 ' Thou shalt become my herald. Straight prepare 355
 ' To bear this message. Flee to Oddune ! Say,
 ' Thy king approaches ! Tell him I am roused,
 ' And God will aid us. Warn him to defend
 ' Right manfully the castle, from whose walls
 ' Soon shall he view me hastening, with a host 360
 ' Of firm and gallant warriors. Go thy way,
 ' And in the depths of Selwood, meet thy king.'

Ceolric heard, and forth his sandals bound,
 And took his knotted staff, and drawing near,
 Thus earnest spake. ' Thy servant will perform 365
 ' All thou hast said, O king ! No time, nor toil,
 ' Nor danger shall deter him : he will haste,
 ' Fearless, to do thy will. God favor him !
 ' And give *thee*, soon, peace and prosperity.'
 Thus saying he departed ; when, his boy, 370
 Alfred embraced, and thus to Acca spake :

' Now must I go, 'mid other scenes and strifes,
 ' Sorrows and dangers. Ill would it beseem
 ' This babe to follow me : him must I leave

' Where caution and fidelity will join 375
 ' Alike to serve him. He has lost a friend—
 ' A mother, who ador'd her infant child !
 ' And I, a wife, most dear. Oh, look not at me !
 ' No common loss is mine.'—

Silent he stood ; 380

A few short moments, pondering ; then again.
 ' Acca with *thee* will I entrust my child !
 ' Thou hast a heart of tenderness. I mark'd
 ' Its secret workings. I can leave my boy
 ' With thee contented, thou shalt be his guard ; 385
 ' This cot his dwelling ; and, when I return
 ' Again to claim my treasure, thou shalt know—
 ' A monarch's gratitude.'

Acca replied,

With inarticulate and broken words, 390
 ' Well shall my care repay thy confidence,
 ' Not from the hope of coming recompense,
 ' But that I love the child. Him will I guard
 ' Both when he sleeps, and wakes, and when thou com'st
 ' Again to seek thine infant, I will shew 395
 ' His growing limbs, that from unceasing care
 ' Spread out and thrive, and tell the silent tale
 ' Of health and tenderness.'

When thus the king :

' I know that thou wilt guard him and display 400
 ' A mother's fondness.' Close he clasp'd his boy,
 And bless'd him, and the prayer, in earnestness,
 Once more preferr'd, when Alfred left the door,
 And urged his way toward Selwood's forest shade.

BOOK VI.

ARGUMENT.

Sigbert taken Prisoner by Guthrum.

SIGBERT, from Ethelney,⁹⁷ o'er moor and fen,
Some tidings of Alswaitha to obtain,
Walk'd musing; now elate with hope, now damp'd
With sudden apprehensions, then again
Heedless of danger. Eve was drawing near: 5
He long had journeyed, and it cheer'd his heart,
When having pass'd a forest, vast and dark,
To find a cottage. Toward the door he sped,
But, ere he reach'd it, sounds of boisterous grief,
And shrieks, burst forth! Awhile he stood and paus'd. 10
Again the shriek! He felt his sword, and came
Bold to the spot. It was two prowling Danes,
Who, ranging far for spoil, had here arrived,
And death was with them. Thro' the door he rush'd,
Th' impetuous Sigbert: when he saw a man, 15
An aged man, hard struggling, stretch'd on earth.
One Dane in act of murder stood! and one
Seized on the cotter's daughter, at whose shriek
He laughs aloud.

Not happier feels the man, 20
When wandering far o'er hill and lofty down,

The snows descending fast, the driving sleet,
 And night approaching, whilst the scene presents
 One wilderness all white, one yawning grave ;
 Not happier feels that man, while pausing sad, 25
 To hear some village clock, from vale beneath,
 Sounding the knell of time, that tells the tale
 Of neighbouring habitation and of rest,
 Than Sigbert felt to see these Danes. His eye,
 Fierce-flashing, half unmann'd them. ' Come, ' he cried, 30
 Murd'ers of Edmund,⁹⁸ come ! Your might I dare ! '
 The strife begins. Sigbert's well-temper'd sword
 Plays valiantly its part. One Dane he slew !
 The other, more infuriate, aim'd the blow,
 Death-dealing. Sigbert wards th' assault, and now 35
 Beats him to earth, and stands the conqueror !
 ' Monster, lie there ! ' he cried, as through his heart,
 Furious, he plung'd his sword.

The cottager

Rose slow and trembling, whilst his daughter came, 40
 And, falling on one knee, said nought ; her eye
 Gazed on the valiant Saxon with a look
 Impassion'd, and more eloquent than words—
 And all the pomp and pageantry of praise.
 When thus the old man spake. ' I first must thank 45
 ' God, for unlook'd deliv'rance, and then thee.'
 ' Aye ! Sigbert cried, ' thank God ! The work is his,
 ' I am his servant ; he it was who screen'd,
 ' At such a time as this, my head, and fired—
 ' My breast with vengeance unappeasable ! 50
 ' Saw'st thou his pleading eyes, yon prostrate Dane,
 ' And how I scorn'd them ? Joy it yields my heart
 ' To think my sword, my caliburno ⁹⁹ true
 ' Is stain'd with Danish blood, and that I thirst
 ' Still to go on destroying. Forth declare, 55
 ' Good father ! how these Danes assaulted thee,
 ' And whence they came.'

The old man sigh'd, and spake.

'Your task, this hour, O chief, is difficult,
'And I am sad. The horrible abyss 69
'From which I just am rais'd, doth so o'erpower
'And dim my recollection, that awhile
'I must look round and think. My daughter, safe ;
'And I, in mine own house ; and there the Danes,
'Prostrate and slain ! Now chieftain, who art thou ?' 65
Sigbert replied, 'I am, good father ! one
'Who travelleth this way on embassy
'Of no small import. I am Alfred's friend,
'Sent by our noble monarch, to inquire—
'Of Glastonbury, seized by savage Danes, 70
'And now in ruins. There was one within,
'His queen, beloved and honour'd. Dost thou know
'Aught of its dwellers ?'

'Yes,' the old man said,
'And what I know is thine. Short season back, 75
'The abbot pass'd, and in his arms he bore
'An infant boy. I asked him whence he came ;
'The Danes, he said, had plunder'd his abode,
'The place thou namedst ; murder'd every soul,
'All but himself and the young child he bore,' 80
'Dost thou say *all*,' cried Sigbert, '*every soul* !'
'Aye, every soul,' he said, 'save one alone,
'The abbot ; who through flames, with that young babe
'Escaped miraculous.'—

'The man thou nam'st, 85
'O father !' Sigbert cried, 'I lately found,
'Murder'd on yonder heath ; the infant child,
'Beneath his cloak, and living : but, tho' strange,
'That child was Alfred's—Alfred's, our good king ;
'Whom, with his queen Alswitha, in that place, 90
'Now burnt and fall'n, deem'd most secure, he left,
'And sought his distant way.'

The old man cried,

'What! Alfred's! *That* his child!' 'Yes,' Sigbert said.
 'And at my monarch's bidding I am bound 95
 'To seek Alswitha, or obtain some news,
 'Or rumour of her fate. The old man thus:
 'Good warrior, it is vain. The queen is dead:
 'For, when the monk approach'd, and shew'd the babe,
 'I ask'd him, who its parents; that, he said, 100
 'He knew not. To the abbey gates they came,
 'And begg'd for food and shelter; when the man,
 '(Who by thy words was Alfred,) left them there,
 'And journey'd on alone, he knew not where.
 'If thou the queen art seeking, vain thy search, 105
 'For oft, and with fresh emphasis, the monk
 'Exclaimed with bitterness, I, only I,
 'And this poor babe, are left.'

The cottager

Then raised his voice and cried, 'God bless our prince! 110
 'Oh, what a heavy crown is his; his woes
 'Are deep and manifold; but, that his boy—
 'His infant boy is safe, in truth, my heart,
 'At such a time, not prone to idle joy,
 'Beats high with transport. But, his murder'd queen! 115
 'Aye, that will try him. God, I trust will yet
 'Have pity on our monarch, loved of all,
 'And give him triumph o'er these Danes, accurs'd,—
 'All demons, in th' imposing shapes of men.'
 'Ah!' Sigbert cried. 'Infernal spawn,—out-pour'd 120
 'From the profoundest reservoirs of hell!'

Thus, of his king, the loyal cottager.

'In truth, good warrior, not a man who breathes
 'On Saxon soil, who would not, him to serve,
 'Meet death itself.¹⁰⁰—Thy sword has rescued me, 125
 'Brave stranger, at an hour most terrible.
 'Forgetful of myself, I turn'd and saw
 'My helpless daughter, the devoted prey,

- ' When I was gone—O spare me, warrior ! Then,
 ' Death had ten thousand terrors !—We must now 130
 ' Leave this abode, though dear to me ; the spot
 ' Where I first drew my breath, and fondly hoped
 ' To spend my few short days in quietness ;
 ' But I must leave it for some unknown home.
 ' Good warrior ! not a flower, or shrub, or tree, 135
 ' Around my little dwelling, but my toil
 ' First planted. I have mark'd their varied growth,
 ' From year to year, and called them with delight,
 ' God pardon ! my mute children ; for they all
 ' Were very dear to me. The pear-tree tall, 440
 ' My oft-shorn hedge-row, and the osier gate
 ' Made by these hands ; the green and level plat ;
 ' The woodbine climbing up, or, thro' the door,
 ' That came, mild visitant ! to give its sweets
 ' To him who rear'd it ; and the martin gay, 145
 ' That round my thatch built ever. Well, in vain
 ' These eyes survey the past, the time is come,
 ' When I must bid adieu to all I love,
 ' A long and last adieu, to scenes so fair !
 ' Now, warrior ! it is eve, and I will forth 150
 ' Set forward on my journey. I must haste
 ' To Cambria's shore, where many friends abide ;
 ' But chief, a minstrel in the court¹⁰¹ who dwells ;
 ' For never will I touch these men, these Danes.
 ' Here let them lie ! This was the seat of peace, 155
 ' And blood affrights my spirit. 'Tis a sight
 ' Arm'd with new terrors. Roving are the Danes
 ' In every path, but I will yet attempt,
 ' At this still hour, my daughter to conduct
 ' To place of safety. Wilt thou, with me flee 160
 ' To Cambria's land ? that hospitable shore !
 ' I there have faithful friends,' the old man said,
 ' Who will repay thee, aye, with better words,
 ' And oftener named, than I ; for I am old,

'For time it takes me to revolve and tell 165
'What thanks are due.'

Sigbert replied: 'Old man!

'It cheers me well to know that I have saved
'Thy life, and this thy daughter's. She is young,
'And many snares are round for innocence. 170
'Flee thou to Cambria. Wise is thy resolve,
'And angels guard thee; but, for me to shun
'The ills that stalk abroad, and with thee seek
'Safety in flight, whilst ravagers prevail
'O'er all the land, would bring Heaven's lightnings down. 175
'I have survey'd my earthly all a wreck,
'And vow'd eternal wrath. This heart hath sworn
'To live but to destroy, to thirst for blood,
'And hurl the dart of vengeance. I must now
'To do my master's service; fare ye well!' 180
'Stop!' cried the cottager, 'We will go forth
'Together. I am old and many fears
'Creep thro' me. But our food we first must part.'
And as he sought it, slow the daughter came
From her low seat, and said; 185

'Brave Saxon! take

'My fervent thanks! I have been watching thee,
'And goodly is thy sight, for thou hast saved
'My aged father! thou hast rescued me!
'And, at a time!—Warrior, receive my thanks! 190
'And Heaven reward thee, at some trying hour,
'When hope hath vanish'd; at an hour like that
'Which we have known.'—Sigbert thus answer made;
'I am most happy, maiden! God it was
'Who sent me thy deliv'rer. Trust in him, 195
'And he will yet defend thee.'—Whilst he spake,
The old man enter'd. In his arms he bore
Two flagons, and some homely food. He cried,
'Here, warrior! freely take, for thou may'st go
'Long ways, and toilsome, ere thou find again 200

‘ Or food or shelter ; such has been the dread
 ‘ Of Danish wrath, that all have fled their homes
 ‘ As we are fleeing.’—

Quitting then the house,

Sigbert kind parting took. The cottager 205
 Moved on disconsolate, and the loved child,
 His daughter. Clear and tranquil were the heavens ;
 The moon was luminous, and Sigbert stood,
 Unseen, to mark the houseless man turn round,
 And view his cottage.. Forward now he walk’d, 210
 A little space, then turning look’d again,
 As loath to leave it ; whilst his daughter saw
 And would have wept, but for her aged sire.

Now deepening mists, shrouded the silver moon,
 And tempests threaten’d. Sigbert o’er the top 215
 Of a bleak hill moved on, and what the dread
 That shook his bosom, when distinct he saw,
 On every side, distant, or near at hand,
 The furious flames arise, whilst heaven’s wide vault
 Shone with the sanguine glare. The track of Danes 220
 That hour was manifest !

Now down he came,

And, wandering through a calm and shady vale
 Espied a ruin’d Abbey. To the spot
 He hastened, and beheld the mouldering walls, 225
 Black with the rust of age, and all within,
 Silence and waste ; while not a sound was heard,
 But the wind moaning, not a form beheld,
 Save one that fancy imaged to his mind—
 The Spirit of Destruction. She who haunts 230
 The moss-grown temples, and the wild resorts
 Of bats and scorpions ; where no mortal steps
 Make the walls murmur with obtrusive sounds ;
 But cries and screeches from nocturnal beings
 Sound evermore, whilst the whole progeny 235

Of doleful things, that court rank solitude,
 Thrive and make merriment. Upon a pile
 She loves to sit, of broken monuments,
 And o'er the scene casts an exultant eye ;
 Smiling to view the massy pillars fallen— 240
 The aged altars—trophies—pedestals ;
 And where the invulnerable shaft withstands
 Her hate and her derision, round she strews
 The creeping Ivy, with its living shade
 To hide all forms of man. 245

He pass'd the door,

When, with a sudden shriek, he near him saw
 A woman fleeing ! Through the porch she rush'd ;
 Whom Sigbert followed : when she turn'd and cried,
 ' Pity the wretched ! Art thou one of us ?— 250
 ' A Saxon ? ' Yes,' the warrior said, ' I am ;
 ' A servant liege of Alfred our good king,
 ' Who, God be prais'd, is safe. And who art thou ?'
 She strove to speak, but her full heart denied
 Uttrance, tho' feeble. Sigbert thus again. 255
 ' Say, woman, dost thou know, or hast thou heard
 ' Aught of our queen Alswitha ? Tho' I seek
 ' To learn some tidings of her, she, I fear,
 ' Or rather know it now with certainty,
 ' Perish'd when Glastonbury fell. Unknown, 260
 ' Concealing thus her name, she there had fled :
 ' And when the Danes o'er that famed place prevail'd,
 ' Alfred our king, distracted, heard the news,
 ' And, 'mid o'erwhelming care, commissioned me,
 ' His servant, to find out her certain fate. 265
 ' Hast thou, O woman ! heard of Alfred's queen ?—
 The woman answer'd, ' Thou hast said her name
 ' Of all unknown, and yet inquir'st of me
 ' For Alfred's queen. Am I a prophetess ?
 ' Yet, from unlook'd-for quarter, I have heard 270
 ' Some rumour of Alswitha ! but no more

'Ask thou to learn, for I have oft been told
 'Of Alfred, and his laws, and charities,
 'And long to see him. Lead me to the king!
 'To him alone will I my tale disclose.' 275

The warrior cried 'This is most hard to bear!
 'Erelong shalt thou behold him. He is now
 'In Selwood's forest; whither with good speed
 'We soon may be.' When thus the woman spake,
 'I thank thee, stranger! but my frame is weak, 280
 'I have been fasting long.' Sigbert exclaim'd,
 'Joy to the friendly cottager! His store
 'Well shall supply thy wants!'—No dainty fare
 'Ever was half so choice, as those hard cates,
 'Sweeten'd by hunger! Sigbert earnest cried, 285
 'Now for thy tale.' The woman answer made.
 'Bewildering thoughts oppress me. Pass we on,
 'Silent awhile, and when my mind is free,
 'My tongue shall speak.'—They both together sped,
 Hour after hour till morn illumed the east, 290
 Pond'ring in deep solicitude. At length,
 Sigbert impatient cried. 'Thee, I conjure!
 'Declare how cam'st thou here, in this lone place,
 'And what thou know'st of her, whom now I seek;
 'Our queen Alswitha?' Thus the woman spake. 295
 'Warrior! no wondrous words are mine. From home,
 'Like countless numbers, I, by Danes am driven—
 'All wretched outcasts; but if more thou seek,
 'Stay till we Alfred meet.'

She scarce had said, 300
 When hastening toward them, they, appall'd, beheld
 A host of horsemen, riding furious on,
 When Sigbert saw, and knew that they were Danes!
 Each would have fled, but on a down they were,
 No covert near. The woman, too, beheld, 305
 And, shivering at her heart, ask'd tremblingly,

'Are those the Danes?' I hear their furious shouts!
 'Those are the Danes!' ¹⁰² When, looking upward, both
 Stood motionless, and saw their certain end.

It was a Danish army led by one— 310
 The aged Guthrum—terrible and fierce;
 When up he came. The woman firm advanced,
 And him address'd.

'O, Dane! behold in me,
 'A wife! a mother! Let me pass unharm'd.' 315
 When thus the chief. 'That thou a mother art,
 'I little heed, but there is in thy port
 'A something that half awes me. Wherefore thus,
 'Learn'dst thou to speak, and, on destruction's brink
 'Stand calm and fearless? Whither art thou bound? 320
 'Thy name?'

She answer'd, 'view in me, O chief!

A wretched being; one whom many cares
 'Have lighted on,—severe and deadly cares,
 'Such and so deep, that one desire alone 325
 'Now buoys my spirit. Let me go in peace!
 'O chieftain! hast thou never felt a joy,
 'Shoot through thy frame, when, after wandering far,
 'Thou turnest homeward, and hast just descried
 'The smoke, uprising, 'mid the forest trees, 330
 'That told thy loved abode? Just such delight
 'Rush'd through my heart, before I saw these bands
 'And thee their leader. As thou valuest home,
 'Let me depart, and happiness be thine.'

The Dane look'd down, and seem'd within to feel 335
 Strange tumults, when he cried: 'Away with thee,
 'Thou subtle pleader! What and whence thou art,
 'I know not! but thy speech doth so inspire
 'With unknown thoughts my mind, that I suspect
 'Thine is some secret charm. Forbear awhile 340

‘ Let me address this Saxon.’—

‘ Art thou, too,

‘ So smooth of tongue, and with such winning words

‘ Arm’d to defeat my fury? Though thou speak’st

‘ Soft as the song of Brag ¹⁰⁸ it shall not change 345

‘ Guthrum’s fix’d purpose. Now, O, man! declare

‘ Why Saxons, tho’ subdued, with desperate hope,

‘ Still strive with Danes for mastery.’

‘ Oh, chief!’

Sigbert replied, ‘ dost thou with settled brow 350

‘ Inquire why we oppose the Danes? why we

‘ Fight for our country?—Know! we yet are free,

‘ And freedom prize, more than we dread thy wrath.

‘ Warrior! thou art a Dane! and I am now,

‘ As one that is not, for the Danes ne’er spare : 355

‘ They never hear the pleader Mercy’s voice,

‘ And feel forgiveness. Take my single life,

‘ But, by the blood of thousands now no more;

‘ But, by the wrath of thousands gathering round,

‘ But, by th’ eternal justice, this I swear— 360

‘ Vengeance shall follow thee! Now, fierce of eye,

‘ Thou seest thy prey, and each quick breath I draw

‘ Sounds like the last: yet, with expiring life,

‘ I will speak fearlessly. Dost thou inquire

‘ Why *we* withstand the Danes? We have our homes, 365

‘ Our altars to defend—our children—wives—

‘ Our king, the best of kings! whom God will yet

‘ Deliver with his red right arm, and hurl

‘ On every Dane fierce thunderbolts. Away!

‘ Back to thy woods and caverns! Leave our soil 370

‘ That groans beneath thee. Leave our suffering prince,

‘ And quit this land, and, o’er the ocean haste,

‘ Or, like devouring meteors, swords shall rise,

‘ Spontaneous, like a forest beaming bright,

‘ And thou shalt gaze on ruin, whose vast flood 375

‘ Shall to destruction sweep the Danish race.’

- Wondering at speech so wild, Guthrum replied :
- ‘ Thy tongue doth so o’erleap all modesty,
 ‘ That I, in truth, could smile. Words not a few,
 ‘ And loud withal, drowning the surly wind, 380
 ‘ Are thy strong mail—thy towers invincible.
 ‘ But didst thou think with ravings such as these
 ‘ To check a Dane triumphant? Saxon, know!
 ‘ I hear a voice within—a well-known voice—
 ‘ The ruler of the Gods. He bids me go 385
 ‘ From strife to strife, from distant land to land,
 ‘ Disdainful of all dangers. Hear me, man!
 ‘ Though Danish heart I boast, I yet can shun
 ‘ To take so mean a life. Do this, and live!
 ‘ Cast on the ground thine armour ; hang thy sword 390
 ‘ On yonder spray, alike the dread of Danes ;
 ‘ Then, hither come, and swear that thou wilt hence
 ‘ Own for thy sovereign, Hubba. Thus escape
 ‘ The wrath that might consume thee.’
- Sigbert cried— 395
- ‘ I throw away my sword ! renounce my king
 ‘ And own for my liege sovereign whom thou call’st
 ‘ Hubba ! thy lord ?—When next with labourings dire,
 ‘ And mortal throe, earth shall again bring forth
 ‘ Such monsters as the Danes, then will I fall 400
 ‘ Before thy Moloch chieftain, and forget
 ‘ My name and country. What hast *thou* to grant,
 ‘ Or to withhold, that I should blast my hopes,
 ‘ Deny the best of kings, and stain my tongue
 ‘ With blasphemy, in calling whom I hate, 405
 ‘ Loathe, execrate—my good and lawful king—
 ‘ The tiger-hearted Hubba? Know, thou Dane!
 ‘ I scorn thy power ! I scorn thy legion’d host !
 ‘ I scorn ye all ! and, if to death ordain’d,
 ‘ Death shall be sweeten’d with one thought, O, chief ! 410
 ‘ That I have vanquish’d thee.’ His sword he rais’d
 And waved it in defiance.

Cried the Dane,

‘Parley is over. By Valhalla’s Gods,
 ‘This sword shall end thee:’ as he drew it forth, 415
 (Bidding his warriors leave him to the fray)
 And rush’d to battle.—Fierce the combatants!
 Both Sigbert and the Dane. ‘Saxon! thy sword!
 ‘Thou hast it not! Where art thou now?’—On earth
 Prostrate lies Sigbert; over stands the Dane, 420
 And with his pendant weapon, cries, ‘Now, man!
 ‘How feel’st thou? Where thy life?’ When Sigbert thus
 (Fiercer as death drew near) ‘Abhorr’d of heaven
 ‘Destroy me! Here I lie. My naked breast
 ‘Courts thee to strike, and, when I cry forbear, 425
 ‘Question my hate of thee.’—Guthrum his sword
 Uprais’d, and as it fell, the woman rush’d
 Eager between, and cried, ‘Withhold thy hand,
 ‘Slaughter him not! or with him slaughter me!’
 Wondering stood Guthrum. Thus again she spake: 430

‘Pardon me, chieftain! in thy face I see
 ‘Marks of no common character: there dwells
 ‘Greatness, but ill directed; valour, truth,
 ‘That might thy name exalt to highest heaven,
 ‘And make thee, as thou truly ought’st to be, 435
 ‘A friend—a benefactor to thy race.
 ‘But thou hast wander’d far. Thy mind is dark.
 ‘Thou trustest in the gods, who, like thyself,
 ‘Were once of flesh and blood; who roam’d through
 earth,
 ‘Destroying and destroy’d. Brave chieftain! know, 440
 ‘There is one God alone, one Lord, who sits
 ‘High in yon starry vault, and with a thought,
 ‘Alike, thro’ heaven and earth, all things directs.
 ‘His name with awe we speak. He is that God
 ‘Who call’d us into being, who supports 445
 ‘All life—Omnipotent—Sovereign supreme!

' He, with His voice of thunder, bids us learn
 ' To love each other, and to know, that all,
 ' The ruler and the ruled, the rich and poor,
 ' The prince and beggar, born in sultry climes, 450
 ' Or where eternal snows all nature hide,
 ' His children are. This mighty Lord hath said,
 ' Thou shalt not murder ! Love thine enemies !
 ' And spare the vanquished ! then, when life is o'er,
 ' To mansions, where yon shining orb abides, 455
 ' With all the brave and merciful, your souls
 ' Shall live for ever. Now, O, warrior ! check
 ' That fierce and deadly wrath, and, dwell with those,
 ' High in yon heavens, who suffer'd and forgave.'

The chieftain dropped his sword, and, slow, inquired, 460
 ' Where is my heart ? What sudden power is this,
 ' Which rushes through my frame, and makes my arm
 ' Tremble and hesitate to strike ? This arm,
 ' That hath its hundreds slain, and combat dared,
 ' And furious onset, when the very air 465
 ' Drank blood ; such countless wounds, at once, all rais'd
 ' Their crimson torrents—I, myself, suspect.'
 When turning to his troops, the warrior cried :
 ' Am I your chieftain ? for this day hath seen
 ' My sword draw back from blood !'— 470

Guthrum look'd up ;

He saw the woman nigh, then thus again :
 ' Thy words I well could bear, and well despise,
 ' O, woman ! but a something in thine air—
 ' A grace, a majesty, doth make me feel, 475
 ' Altho' a Dane, well arm'd, and as thou seest
 ' Surrounded by this host of fearless men,
 ' A most strange littleness. I half forget
 ' That I am Denmark's chief, and thou a slave !
 ' Away ye dastard feelings ! I will now 480
 ' To action rise and be myself once more.

- ' Did not this hour a living man defy
 ' Guthrum the Dane, and with presumptuous threats
 ' Offer him battle? ¹⁰⁴ Was it fancy vain,
 ' Or, was it thou? (to Sigbert, low, he said;) 485
 ' Thy destiny is seal'd! for I will deal
 ' Instant destruction: ' High he rais'd his hand
 And as all hearts stood still, waiting the blow—
 Sudden he sheath'd his sword, and loud exclaim'd
 ' Saxon, receive thy life! for thou art brave, 490
 ' And never shall the brave man meet his death,
 ' Disarm'd and prostrate, as I see thee now.
 ' That thought hath saved thee. Rise! I spare thy life!
 ' Thou shalt become my herald. Bear these words
 ' To him, thy master, Alfred, whose high soul 495
 ' Thou well canst imitate. Inform thy king,
 ' One certain fate awaits him; tell him I,
 ' Guthrum the Danish chief, am journeying on
 ' Toward Kenwith, where the trembling Oddune lies,
 ' And starves for succour, whilst around the walls 500
 ' Hubba, my prince, encamps. I thither go,
 ' To vanquish that proud Saxon, and to dogs
 ' His carcass cast; when, by the Gods on high—
 ' By Odin, Thor, and Freya¹⁰⁶ and the race
 ' Of matchless deities, who throng thy halls, 505
 ' O, Valhall! we will hunt thy monarch out,
 ' And if this land contain him, whether hid
 ' In glen or cavern, wood or mountain bare,
 ' This sword shall find, and these exulting eyes
 ' Gaze on his mangled corse. Tell thou thy king, 510
 ' His doom is certain! Let him call and pray
 ' To the great God he worships, and behold
 ' Whether his might can aid, when Danes, erelong,
 ' Approach his hiding-place. His voice may sound,
 ' Loud and more loud, but he shall learn how vain 515
 ' Aid to invoke, when Denmark's warriors claim
 ' Their fated prey.'

'Oh, warrior! heed my prayer, nor thus oppress
 'A poor weak woman. Didst thou know what calls
 'Sound in mine ear, thou would'st regard my words, 555
 'And let me harmless pass; for I have one,
 'Far off, a husband, who my absence mourns,
 'And who would die to hear that I was met
 'By thee, O chieftain! and perforce convey'd,
 'Whither he knew not. Pity me, brave chief! 560
 'And let me call thee blessed.'

Guthrum look'd

Stern, and thus answer made. 'Thou plead'st in vain!
 'I never change my purpose. Cease thy fears.
 'Thou shalt be cheer'd by her who calls me Sire. 565
 'My name is Guthrum. Tedious thus to wait.
 'Mount yonder steed! and, at some future time
 'Again thou may'st return, and seek thy home.'
 'To talk of future hopes,' the woman said,
 'Were vain indeed. I have no future hopes! 570
 'The bird that for her young, flies many a mile,
 'And, now returns to seek them, when she finds
 'Her treasure gone, her all, her little all,
 'Gone, and no vestige left, feels such as I:
 'For I am homeward bound, and many a thought 575
 'Made my heart glad, but thou hast marr'd them all,
 'And life is now a blank,—a cheerless void!
 'I am a poor deserted woman, sunk
 'In prostrate misery. If I *must* go,—
 'For ever leave, one whom my heart adores!— 580
 'I would submit! '—

Approaching Sigbert now,

Fault'ring she cried, 'Thou yet art free.
 'One favour do I ask.' When from her neck
 She took a string of pearls, ¹⁰⁷ and with a sigh, 585
 The Saxon thus address'd. 'Stranger, take this.
 'And if in times, or near, or far remote,
 'Thou e'er should'st see, one, who remembers these,

· Declare, that she who own'd them, now endures
· Sorrows and hard captivity ; yet, say, 590
· She lov'd her husband—mourn'd her infant child—
· Gone to his fathers ! Tell him,' she declared,
· If e'er he saw her living, he should find—
· Her heart still pure ; and if, far off, she died,
· To pity one, who, with her latest breath, 595
· Call'd on her husband, and from Heaven implored,
· Blessings on him and his.'

This having said,

She, on a charger, with the Danish force,
(The child of Guthrum near her, and her friend) 600
Sped o'er the plain, reluctant, looking back,
Whilst Sigbert, heartless, turn'd to seek the King.

A L F R E D :

BOOK VII.

ARGUMENT.

ALFRED meets an Army of Saxons, fleeing into Wales from Ivar ; he persuades them to accompany him to Selwood Forest ; meets his troops ; sends heralds to arouse his Subjects.

Slow from the cottage door of Ethelney,
Languid at heart, tho' fix'd in his resolve,
The king departed, whilst his fancy pored
On Oddune, close confined, and haply forced
To war with famine : who, both night and morn, 5
Perchance from watch-tower top, gazed earnestly
To hail approaching succour. Alfred too
Dwelt on Alswitha's fate—that harrowing thought,
The inmate of his mind, that evermore,
When other sorrows came, an entrance gave, . 10
Yet not possession. As he Selwood sought,
In bitterness of spirit, thus he cried.

' Oh, what the cares of him who wears a crown,
' And feels its heavy charge ! What are his woes,
' The prince, who knows his duties, and revolves 15
' At noon, and night—at eve and early morn,
' What best may serve his subjects, but perceives
' Crosses and endless barriers throng his way.

- ' Ruler of Heaven ! Almighty Sire ! O, grant
 ' Thy guidance and protection ; Thy support, 20
 ' In this last struggle for my country's cause ! '

Whilst musing thus, with wonder he beheld
 A host of strangers. Nearer now they come :
 They knew their monarch by the port he bore ;
 When, with one general shout, aloud they cry, 25
 ' Our King ! Our King ! Long live our glorious King ! '
 Alfred, advancing, thus the band address'd :
 ' Friends, and brave subjects, cheering is your sight
 ' At this lone hour. But, wherefore on your march ?
 ' And whither bound ? ' Their leader thus replied : 30
 ' O, king, we bear sad tidings ! there are now,
 ' Just landed on thy shores, a host of Danes,
 ' Greater than eye hath witness'd and their chief,
 ' IVAR the fierce. The company thou seest
 ' Are bound to Cambria,¹⁰⁸ for on English soil 35
 ' Thro' Danes, the scourge, the wasters of all lands,¹⁰⁹
 ' Safety is far away.'

Alfred replied,

Indignant at his subjects' cowardice,
 ' Men ! with your king return, and scorn to flee. 40
 ' Who dares invade our soil ! ' When one replied :
 ' We must at such a time resist e'en thee.
 ' Death hovers round. Our welfare is in flight,
 ' And we have vow'd, all that before thee stand,
 ' To seek in other climes, that safe retreat 45
 ' Thy kingdom cannot yield.'

Alfred arous'd

From transient slumber, now was hastening fast
 To meet his subjects : poring with delight
 On future contests, courage bravely tried, 50
 And many a deed, magnanimous, that led
 To certain triumph ; but when he beheld,
 In those he met, the ignoble soul, that shrank

From glorious enterprize, he felt his heart
 Sink with such killing damp, as he endures 55
 Who, journeying o'er some rude and barren waste,
 Perchance Helsingia, or those desert hills
 Tydal or Doffrin,¹¹⁰ where the whirlwind roars,
 Eternal, whilst the eddying snows drift round,
 And tempests rave,—sounding their ceaseless war ;— 60
 As he endures, while toiling o'er these scenes
 Of dread magnificence, and in the joys
 Of home partaking, when he sees, aghast,
 The bridge, that o'er the boisterous torrent hung,
 From clift to clift, borne from its giddy height, 65
 And the loud bellowing tide impassable.¹¹¹

After a moment's pause, Alfred replied :
 ' Before you go, I know that you will hear,
 ' Patient, your monarch.' Round they all approach,
 When thus he spake : 70
 ' Subjects ! tho' absent long
 ' I have been planning for you, and am now
 ' Returning in your cause. The adverse hour
 ' We all have known, yet, let us not despair,
 ' And we shall conquer. Think how Saxons met 75
 ' In former times, the Caledonian¹¹² host,
 ' Fierce from their snowy mountains ! Think again,
 ' How we, undaunted, faced that daring man—
 ' ROLLO the Norman,¹¹³ when upon our coast
 ' His navy rode, and less than Saxon heart 80
 ' (Such was his might) had awed, but, in our strength,
 ' We dared him, and the robber chieftain fled
 ' To ravage weaker climes. So shall the foe,
 ' That now assaults us, flee. Before the wrath
 ' Of injured Saxons, weak the hostile spear, 85
 ' And weak the hand that guides it. Ills may rise,
 ' Many, and threaten to destroy our race,
 ' The very name of Saxon, but, the day,

- 'The glorious day of triumph hastens fast.
 'There is a point in human wretchedness 90
 'Beyond whose bound, the wretched cannot feel,
 'And nothing here is lasting. We have felt,
 'Each that before me stands, that prostrate state,
 'That absence of all hope, and we may now
 'Look on to happier times. Cheer up, brave men! 95
 'The king whom you have served, and by whose side
 'Met the fierce fight undaunted, now demands
 'Your further aid, and shall he plead in vain?
 'In desp'rate hour like this, will you forsake
 'Me, your liege Prince? Seek ignominious flight? 100
 'Have I thus fought and suffered, now to hear
 'The voice of disobedience?—now to find
 'A coward's heart in Saxon? am I doom'd
 'To reign, but not to rule, and at this time,
 'Behold you shun the conflict, when the foe 105
 'Spreads rapine o'er our land? It cannot be!
 'Some Fiend hath spread the calumny; the sound
 'Came from the air, for never Saxon tongue
 'Dealt in such words.—
 'My subjects! I have long 110
 'Endured a weighty burden, I have lived,
 'Goaded with cares, which filled my mind by day,
 'And, when night came, assumed a character
 'Ten-fold more fearful. What have I sustain'd
 'These ills for?—to support a crazy crown? 115
 'For what have I defied the elements,
 'And bared my head, and 'mid the hottest strife,
 'Mix'd undismay'd?—to guard the name of King?
 'Thou know'st, O heart! that now art beating high,
 'Thou know'st it was not! These my feet have toil'd 120
 'This mind hath ponder'd, and this head endured
 'Life's crushing cares for nobler purposes!—
 'Whom have *you* dared the fight for? for your king?
 'To save yourselves? or, hurl destruction's brand

' Fierce on the Danes? No! nobler views were yours. 125
 ' You fought for liberty. You fought to save
 ' All that is dear in life—your peaceful homes
 ' Your helpless sires, your wives, your innocents!
 ' And, not for these alone, but, distant heirs—
 ' For generations yet unborn, the race 130
 ' Of future Saxons, down to farthest time;
 ' Who, oft as they shall hear what we endured
 ' To guard their rights, the precious blood we shed
 ' To make their lives secure, and bid the form
 ' Of holy Freedom rise engirt with flowers 135
 ' Of amaranthine hue, shall look to Heaven,
 ' And with no common fervour bless the names
 ' Of us their great forefathers, who for them,
 ' Endured, but triumph'd—suffered, but obtain'd.—
 ' Now boldly I advance to meet the foe; 140
 ' And you whose souls shrink with the coward's fear,
 ' Turn not to me! Haste to your safe retreat,
 ' And joy, if joy you can, when far away,
 ' To think of those who suffer'd from your flight,
 ' To think for what your brethren fought and died.' 145
 Alfred his sword unsheath'd, the scabbard cast
 Far in the air; and singly marched along.
 All follow'd, shouting, 'Death or Victory!'

' Alfred beheld and cried, ' Ye gallant host,
 ' Receive my praises. Now again I see 150
 ' My former subjects; now th' inspiring hope
 ' Of triumph and prosperity makes glad,
 ' The heart, once sinking; now the time draws near
 ' When Saxons, long estranged from happiness,
 ' May forward look and smile. Your country's hope, 155
 ' To Selwood's forest near I lead you on.
 ' Yet, first approach, who dar'd resist my will,
 ' And talk'd of flight rather than victory.'
 Trembling, the man drew near; when thus the king.

'Coward! be this thy punishment. Away! 160
 'Flee thou to Cambria. By thyself depart,
 'And we will fight thy battles. We will screen
 'Thy children from the fury of the Danes.'

The man replied, 'Pardon an erring mind.
 "'Till these thy words I knew not the full cause 165
 'For which we combat. Now I see aright.
 'My heart is true, and if I do not hence
 'Fight manfully, and due atonement make
 'For past offence—let my *sons* curse their sire.'
 Alfred replied: 'Saxon my wrath is past! 170
 'Th' Almighty asks no more, and why should man.
 'Thou art my friend.' This having said, they all,
 Sought the near forest Selwood.

Braver men
 Ne'er combated misfortune, than who dwelt 175
 Embower'd there. When first they heard their king
 Cry, 'March to Selwood. Thither shall ye find
 'Hope and your prince together;' on they march'd,
 And in their monarch's ills forgot their own.
 They there a fortress rear'd¹¹⁴ entrench'd and strong, 180
 And peace was with them. Round a little hill
 They pitch'd their tents, with trees all cover'd o'er,
 The growth of ages, 'mid whose spreading limbs
 Of beech, and oak, and elm, the castle rose,
 Cheering each Saxon's heart.— 185

And when the hour,
 The silent hour of sunset, deep'ning slow,
 Made grey the forest, on the roots of trees,
 Or stones, or mosses, many a mournful group
 Sat with fix'd brow, and told some direful tale 190
 Of Danish cruelty, hair-breadth escapes,
 Or, filled with sorrow, mourn'd their fallen friends.

'Twas on a tranquil eve when thus they sat,

Communing. In her glory the fair moon
 Shone over head. The breeze of night was still, 195
 And quietness, unbroken quietness,
 Mark'd all around; save where the bittern's voice
 Came from far distance, making yet more plain
 The silence universal. When one spake :—
 'Dread apprehensions fill my mind. I feel 200
 'Fears, searching—for our wise and noble king.
 'In wretched state he left us. Sad his heart;
 'And in the depth of hard disquietude
 'He bade us all farewell. Such wrongs are his,
 'That, how his brain may suffer, we may hope, 205
 'But cannot say. I mark'd his last address;
 'He seem'd bewilder'd. Never shall I more
 'Our king behold! his road was perilous,
 'And some avenging Dane, or Melancholy,
 'Or Frenzy wild, hath on him seiz'd, and then 210
 'Where is the hope of Britons? Here we are,
 'Eating our pittance, but at length ordain'd
 'To death or abject servitude.' No tongue
 Answered the warrior, and, as mute they sat,
 A noise is heard! Each upward sprang and cried, 215
 'To arms! The enemy!'

Scarce had they said,
 When each appear'd, clad in his war array.
 Spies are appointed. Now the fearful noise
 Draws nearer, and more loud and terrible 220
 It sounded in their ears. The chieftains still
 Ponder how best to act, when one exclaim'd,
 'The trying hour is come. I know yon voice.
 'It is the shout of Danes! Some traitorous tongue
 'Hath told them our retreat, and they are now 225
 'Hastening to meet us. We have lost our king,
 'But not our courage.' All, their swords displayed,
 And clash'd their shields, and felt the fixed resolve
 To die or triumph. Wistfully they look'd,

Each silent, when they saw the spies approach. 230
 They cry, 'The king! He comes, our monarch comes!'
 Forth with wild ecstasy they rush, while now
 The springs of hope burst forth, and shouts arise,
 Startling the tranquil sky.

Alfred his friends, 235

Well-known, beheld. He sees their glistening eyes
 Speak clear of exultation. Glad at heart,
 He would have greeted each, embraced them all,
 But all had equal claims, and where to turn
 He knew not, pond'ring still. So feels the man 240
 Who after wearying toil, has reach'd at length
 Some lofty summit, from whose brow, his eye
 Roams o'er the space below; tho' charm'd with all,
 Yet gazing idly; doubtful where to fix
 His ravish'd sight, on distant hill, or mead, 245
 Or woody vale, or foaming cataract,—
 Like some huge serpent, with its glittering scales,
 Coiling o'er crags, or with its line of light
 Streaking the mount,—as sleeping in its joy;
 So still it seems, by distance sooth'd to rest. 250
 Alfred prepared to speak, but still the shouts—
 'Long live our king!' drown'd each inferior sound;
 When on he pass'd, surrounded by a host
 Of loud-rejoicing subjects. Now the king
 Approach'd the citadel, and, from the bank, 255
 High heap'd, that belted it, addressed his troops.

'Saxons and friends beloved! you thus to meet,
 'After short absence, in some common time,
 'Would waken pleasure, but to see you now
 'With hearts your own, unconquer'd, and prepared 260
 'Once more to serve your country,—warms my breast
 'With exultation, such as clothes in shade
 'Past sorrows, now retiring like a dream.
 'Yet memory checks the ardour of my speech.

' When last we parted, many a heavy care
' Press'd on my heart, but since that cheerless hour,
' My woes have doubled. She whom I adored,—
' Your queen—Alswitha, now, no longer lives !
' The Danes have murder'd her ! '

The rising wind, 270

That at that instant swept across the trees—
 Their topmost branches spreading more and more,
 Till every limb, both far and near, obey'd
 The general impulse, seem'd to imitate
 The murmur that at first around the king
 Rose in slow-moving sounds, then spread itself,
 Till every Saxon heard the doleful news.

Alfred again : ' If ever man endured
 ' Perplexities and sore disquietude,
 ' That man am I ! I, for Alswitha feel, 280
 ' For you, my friends, your children yet unborn.
 ' Hence, learn of me your monarch.—Late, I saw
 ' The hopeless prospect, and despair endured,
 ' Palsying the heart ! but now, when deeper wrongs
 ' Have press'd me down, my soul, elastic, spurns 285
 ' Its feeble trammels, and to action calls
 ' Its firm and latent powers. A little grief
 ' Hearts may o'erwhelm, when ills of bolder sort
 ' Meet due resistance—such has been my lot.
 ' This is my resolution. I am come 290
 ' To dare again the war ; to claim once more,
 ' Warriors ! your final efforts ; to arouse
 ' Each Saxon, and inspire his heart anew.
 ' What tho' the base Northumbrian shun the fight,
 ' And Mercia in this dark extremity, 295
 ' Withhold her promised succour, let *our* hearts
 ' Glow with intenser zeal. Let Wessex' sons
 ' Shine greatest in misfortune. Let us rise,
 ' And bid distrust, stand off ! despair, avaunt !

' And learn that courage, arm'd in freedom's cause, 300
 ' No barrier knows.—Think, oh ye list'ning host !
 ' How many injur'd spirits round us throng,
 ' And urge us to the fight ! how many tongues
 ' Of children and of mothers, wives and friends,
 ' Plead at the throne of justice for our cause, 305
 ' And us, their brave defenders ! Think again
 ' Of future generations, who shall feel
 ' The blaze of liberty, or eat the bread
 ' Of anguish and subjection.'—Louder yet,
 Sounded through all the air, the general shout, 310
 ' Long live our monarch ! Death or victory !'
 When thus again the king :

' I know too well

' What Saxon heart is made of, to suspect
 ' Your resolution, bold and gallant men ! 315
 ' Yet, know that courage, courage good and true,
 ' Thinks deep, and, from a view dispassionate,
 ' Looks well around ; in silence calculates
 ' Each possibility ; then calmly plans—
 ' What best may lead to a triumphant end. 320
 ' This you have done, and heaven will prosper you.—
 ' Disastrous news prevails ! Ivar the Dane
 ' On Saxon soil hath landed, with new hordes
 ' Bent on our utter ruin. Undismay'd
 ' I heard the tidings. It inflamed my heart 325
 ' With more determin'd zeal, and from mine eyes
 ' Tore the thick film. I then beheld this truth,—
 ' Most clear,—that nothing now could Britain save
 ' But her own innate courage, with the smiles
 ' Of him who smiles on courage, when the cause 330
 ' Like ours is just.—Soon as to-morrow's sun
 ' Illumes the east, a chosen band shall speed
 ' Throughout our towns and villages, to call
 ' All men to arms, in whom there still survives
 ' One latent spark of love to home, or friends, 335

‘Country, or king :—to tell them with a voice—
‘Oracular, that if they now should fail
‘To join our standard, and let cowardice
‘Unnerve their spirits, hope itself is fled,
‘And we must hence crouch at the conqueror’s car ! 340

‘Not so,’—full many a warrior round exclaim’d,
‘Nor at to-morrow’s dawn will we depart
‘To rouse thy people, we will, undismay’d,
‘This instant leave thee. Yonder silver orb
‘Shall light our steps, and many a gallant man 345
‘Soon crowd around thy standard.’

Forth they speed—
To range thro’ Wessex, calling all to arms.

A L F R E D:

BOOK VIII.

ARGUMENT.

Alfred's interview with a Hermit—Sigbert returns—His narration.

ERE yet the east told of approaching morn,
Alfred arose, disturb'd with many a care.
He knew the wrath of Ivar, and the deeds
His hand might do, ere Saxon stemm'd his course.
He thought upon Alswitha. Stillness mark'd 5
The scene around him, when he left the fort,
And wandered through the forest, till he came
To a green plat, o'ercanopied with trees,
Whose thick umbrageous limbs half hid the light,
Unfolding slow. 'This,' said the troubled king, 10
'Shall be my altar.' When he pour'd the prayer.

'Maker of all around ! of heaven and earth !
'Altho' th' angelic host may not endure
'Thy majesty, each suppliant thou wilt hear
'Who with a contrite heart approacheth thee. 15
'In this last struggle for my country's rights,
'Grant me success' But as thine eye, beneath
'Futurity's dark veil, pierces and sees

'The end from the beginning, Thou alone
 'Know'st what is best, and let thy will be done! 20
 'Thou art my only trust. I hasten now
 'To raise the sword, and may I never raise
 'That scourge of human kind, but in the cause
 'Of life and liberty, when I can ask,
 'As I this moment do, Thy blessing on it. 25
 'And if hereafter, in some happier time,
 'These gathering tempests over, Thou should'st fix
 'My throne in steadfastness—may royalty
 'Change not my heart, my gratitude to Thee,
 'Nor blind my mind to truth. May life appear 30
 'What now it does, a shadow, a brief tale,
 'The dream of morn, a fleeting summer cloud,
 'Fair to behold, but whose stability
 'Changes beneath the sight. May I aspire
 'E'en then, to serve my Maker, to promote 35
 'That cause transcendent, which to fallen man
 'Breathes solace to the spirit, whisp'ring peace,
 'Thro' the Great Sacrifice of Calvary!—
 'Our joy in life, our only hope in death!
 'If call'd, erelong, to wear the diadem 40
 'In peace and quietness, O, grant thine aid!
 'Be mine the great example! May I learn—
 'To love my subjects—love my fellow-kind—
 'To do all good, and know that I was made,
 'Not for parade and ornament, a king, 45
 'But to advance all virtues, so shall years
 'Far distant bless me, and thy smiles at last
 'Crown this my mortal life.'

The king now roam'd
 Far through the tangled trees;¹¹⁵ for images, 50
 Succeeding fast, had with their rapid speed
 So fill'd his mind, that he had wander'd on
 To the far distant portion of the wood,
 Unknowing, when he stopp'd, and, looking round,

Beheld a man, who in the vale of years— 55
 Far on had travelled. A long beard he had ;
 A garment loose about his shoulders hung,
 And in his hand, feebly he held a staff.
 A look more free from all created care
 No eye had seen. 60

Alfred drew near and said,
 ‘ Pardon me, father ! whither art thou bound,
 ‘ Thus early ? ‘ Son,’ the old man cried, ‘ thy words
 ‘ Come from an honest tongue, tho’ my dim sight
 ‘ But half perceives thee. Whither art *thou* bound ? 65
 ‘ For this lone track along the forest’s verge
 ‘ My feet have worn, and I have seldom seen
 ‘ The welcome stranger. May I ask the cause
 ‘ Of thine appearance, at this early hour,
 ‘ When the first beam scarce glimmers in the sky ?’ 70
 Alfred replied : ‘ Good father, I am one
 ‘ Whose heart is sad, and I have hither stray’d,
 ‘ To ease perchance the melancholy pang
 ‘ That goads my bosom. May I now inquire
 ‘ Who *thou* art, with a countenance so mild, 75
 ‘ And so commanding in a place like this ?’

The old man answered, ‘ I a hermit am,
 ‘ Whose path this is at night and early morn,
 ‘ When birds in concert sing, and I can feel 80
 ‘ That there is life abroad, tho’ in my heart
 ‘ I feel it for another ; for I now
 ‘ Creep where I once have bounded, and shall soon
 ‘ Cease e’en to creep, for old age comes apace,
 ‘ And I with this good staff move feebly, yet 85
 ‘ I dread it not, for in my early days
 ‘ I walk’d with wisdom.’ ‘ Father,’ Alfred cried,
 ‘ It is a goodly thing to walk, like thee,
 ‘ With wisdom, but to know what wisdom is,
 ‘ Sometimes is hard. What guide is thine, old man ? 90

The hermit answered, 'Son, I love to hear
 'Such questions asked, for to inquire the way
 'That leads to truth, in this our erring world,
 'Shews a right spirit. Son my guide was this—
 'The Word of God, which understood and felt, 95
 'Both in the head and in the heart, promotes
 'That quiet contemplation of all round,
 'Wisdom loves best—that first of earthly gifts—
 'A peaceful conscience. I have oft sustain'd
 'Sore troubles, and endured such cares, as seem'd 100
 'Too hard for man; but, I o'ercame them all
 'By faith in Heaven; and here at length I am,
 'Still hoping, not forgotten, and about
 'To change my earthly dwelling, I would hope
 'For an inheritance beyond the skies.' 105

'Father!' the king replied, 'no common words
 'Seem thine, and, of experience, thou hast gain'd
 'By deep researches, and communing oft
 'With heavenly influence, I would fain partake.'
 The hermit thus. 'Thy wish, I willing grant, 110
 'And may my humble words hereafter rise,
 'In some still moment, and bestow on thee
 'A portion of that joy which I have felt,
 'From the same recollection.—This the sum
 'Of fourscore years, and this the best advice 115
 'An aged man can give.—A prize is thine,
 'Known chiefly by its want, for thou hast youth
 'And health before thee, let it not pass by,
 'Unwelcom'd, unimproved. I tell thee, son!
 'This is true wisdom; God, to love and serve,— 120
 'In the one way, alone acceptable,—
 'By faith in *him* who died that we might live!—
 'There is a secret energy in faith. Its power
 'Gives strength to feebleness :—the natural man,
 'Though humble in the scale of intellect, 125

- ' It lifts beyond his level. It confers
 ' A character of dignity ;—a rank
 ' Felt by the loftiest ;—'bove all contumely.
 ' Its countenance—great in humility,
 ' Presents credentials of its higher birth ;— 130
 ' Springing from truth, integrity,—a mind
 ' Whose principles are drawn exclusively
 ' From Heaven's pure law.
- ' An elevation this
- ' Steadfast,—amid the perishable things 135
 ' That sway earth's vassals. Still let infidels,
 ' Scoffers and tainted spirits, phantoms chase,
 ' Worship their idols, and, in enmity,
 ' Heap loud reproach on wisdom's votaries,—
 ' Their triumph will be brief. This truth is stamp'd 140
 ' Indelible, in the celestial archives.—None !—
 ' None but the pure in heart to Heaven ascend.
 ' Subjects of Faith, the friends of Calvary.
 ' These are the truly great, who will be found
 ' Acquitted, welcomed to the seraph throng, 145
 ' In that dread moment, when the sons of men—
 ' The small, the mighty,—all alike to Him,—
 ' Who tries the heart and reins, shall hear their doom !
 ' The meanest in the family of faith,
 ' Renew'd and sanctified, God will confess, 150
 ' And honour, when earth's pomp and pageantry—
 ' Scroll-like, have pass'd away.
- ' Let the vain world
- ' Erect their Babels !—nobler hopes be thine !—
 ' Reaching beyond earth's low solitudes.— 155
 ' The sovereign ruler own, and supplicate :
 ' His favour seek ;—his guidance, not thine own—
 ' Confide in, and tho' rough the road be found,
 ' The end will well repay thee, and become
 ' Prelude to peace on earth, and bliss in Heaven. 160
 ' That vast profound,—unfathomably deep !

' The human mind—the spark of Deity,
 ' On purity, alone, can rest itself—
 ' Contented, conscious of its origin,
 ' Which mocks the lofty things that man calls great, 165
 ' Soaring above them. Where is he, whose heart,
 ' Blest with created good, can calmly say,
 ' I ask no more?' Can wealth or honors yield
 ' Abiding happiness? Can splendour soothe
 ' The craving appetite that asks for bread 170
 ' Earth never granted? Can the scepter'd King,
 ' Stretch'd on the couch of state, whose anxious brow
 ' Laurels entwine, while all soft melodies
 ' Glide through the air—can he this blessing boast?
 ' Can these low objects fill th' immortal mind,— 175
 ' E'en bless'd with health? But when the Foe draws near,
 ' So fast approaching!—with his Sable Train,
 ' Langour, Disease, and Death, earth's proudest gifts
 ' Will vanish, lost in littleness and night!'

The hermit thus continued. ' Hear me, son! 180
 ' If the long catalogue of earthly joys
 ' Fail to support the breast, which toils beneath
 ' Their proudest blessings, and endures them all
 ' Rather than owns their worth; what is there here,
 ' Wisdom may covet, and the deathless mind 185
 ' Esteem its greatest good?—Virtue alone!
 ' The offspring of Religion.—Love to man—
 ' To God, and, Faith in His Adored Son.
 ' This is the pearl of price unspeakable!
 ' Let those declare th' extent of earthly power 190
 ' To stay the mind, whose restless hearts have sought
 ' Tranquillity in all created things,
 ' But found it not: tho' disappointed, still
 ' Grasping at shadows, vainly seeking rest,
 ' Yet, like the troubled ocean, to and fro 195
 ' Toss'd by perpetual storms; striving to fill

- 'That aching void within, which baffles them,—
 'Whate'er their boast of potent antidotes,
 'Till they have tasted of the Word of Life,
 'And learn'd to say, (My Father, and My God!) 200
 'Then shall the hour, that calls them hence, be peace.
 'A very bitter thing it is, to view
 'In Death an enemy, to feel disease,
 'Incurable, advancing, or old age
 'Creep on, and find no consolations kind, 205
 'Smooth the rough way, when at life's precipice!
 'Mind not thy cares, if cares thou hast, young man!
 'They are the lot of mortals, and approach
 'Not of themselves, but are the ministers
 'Of Him who loves His creatures, and appoints 210
 'These his best means to do them benefit;
 'Yet, one thing heed! Grieve not that God, who made
 'Man in His image, and appointed him,
 'But for his own perverseness, to possess,
 'In Heaven above, 'mid saints and seraphim 215
 'Pure and eternal joys. This ever fear!
 'For there shall come a time, to him who sins
 'Against the light within him, when his heart
 'Shall loath all good, and with abhorrence view
 'The flower he may not touch, which to his mind 220
 'Brings hateful recollections.—Once again,
 'As I may never more behold thy face,
 'In this uncertain, shadowy, fleeting state,
 'Let me, my son! conjure thee, to esteem,
 'Bove all created things, that Precious Book! 225
 'That anchor of all hope! that Treasury
 'Of holy knowledge, which, in boundless love,
 'God hath bestow'd on man. There, mortals hear
 'Of a diviner heritage; a land
 'Where Patriarchs and Prophets now enjoy, 230
 'With all th' assembled Worth of years pass'd by,
 'Felicities supreme,—e'en in that world

'Where dwells alone, 'mid the vast Universe,
'Pure Righteousness—the brightest Gem of Heaven!'

Thus Alfred, with unwonted earnestness. 235
'Father! I fain would know the precious source
'Whence this thy wisdom flows; the avenue
'Thro' which thy mind possess'd, thy heart acquired,
'This fund and plenitude of Sacred Truths.'

The Hermit answer'd thus. 240

'Stranger! two springs
'Have pour'd their healing waters on my soul.
'First, portions of the Sacred Oracles,
'To my own tongue transferr'd, by Wessex' King,
'Alfred, whom God preserve! A treasure this, 245
'Conferr'd on me, and thousands, which will shower
'Blessings and benedictions on his head—

'From age to age,—yea, through Eternity!
'Next, and not least,—the teachings of God's Spirit,
'(Without whose aid all human help were vain) 250
'So freely given, to all who supplicate

'In the prevailing name of Him, whose blood,
'For guilty man, once flow'd upon the Cross.
'If e'er I Alfred meet, (presumptuous thought!)
'How would I urge, intreat, conjure, implore, 255

'That he would perfect,—give, munificent,
'To Saxons, hungering for the Bread of Life,
'The Scriptures, in their full and amplest form.
'His fragments come like nectar to the soul!
'What then must be the whole?—the Government 260

'Of twice two-thousand years of God to man,—
'His dealings, warnings, revelations, laws,
'All given to fit a People for the skies?
'Stranger, these Scriptures are the balm of woe.
'Drink of their words; bind them about thy heart; 265
'Make them thy daily thought, thy nightly prayer!
'They open, when this transient life shall end,

' Rich and stupendous views, such as o'erwhelm,
 ' (When for a moment earthly things retire)
 ' The soul with ecstasy. They cast a beam, 270
 ' Cheering, o'er death's dark vale, and with their hopes,
 ' Stable as Heaven, 'mid prospects infinite,
 ' Conquer the Mighty Conqueror of mankind!
 ' Whilst reading of that glorious company
 ' Who shout Hosannas to their Lord, my heart 275
 ' Glows as I read, for there I hope to dwell!
 ' (Th' imperfect left behind) to meet again
 ' Each friend departed, destin'd there to form
 ' Superior friendships, and mature those flowers
 ' Which budded here below. Oh, joyous thought! 280
 ' The Weeping, and the Wept, how soon to meet,
 ' (A point between) never to part again!
 ' There, in the regions of beatitude,
 ' Our souls shall welcome countless spirits pure,
 ' Lights of past ages, thro' th' eternal year, 285
 ' To bask in light and love. T'indulge the thought
 ' That I, erelong, shall taste this happiness,
 ' Thro' Him who is the Way, the Truth, the Life,
 ' Makes me o'er Earth's wide wilderness pass on,
 ' Regardless of its thorns, remembering well, 290
 ' When these low, momentary pangs are o'er,
 ' I have a better rest.—There, may we meet,
 ' When time shall be no more!'

Alfred thus spake.

' The King, whose toils thou praisest, may he yet,— 295
 ' Should favouring hour arrive, his work renew;
 ' And, thro' the land, the heralds of Glad Tidings,—
 ' The Scriptures, circulate, till every house
 ' (If will could work a miracle so great)
 ' Possess'd it, from the Cottage to the Throne. 300
 ' Now father, fare thee well. Thy precepts rare
 ' My spirit warm. They sink into my heart;
 ' And on them I shall ponder fervently,

' When far away. There are important calls
 ' Which need my service, but again I trust 305
 ' To see and hear thee. Father, now farewell !'
 ' Farewell, my son !' the Hermit said, when both
 Turn'd, with a mutual prayer, to seek their homes.

The King now hastens to the distant fort,
 More confident and calm. He saw the gate, 310
 And entering in, beheld each warrior's eye
 Glisten with rapture ; but a settled gloom
 Mark'd his contemplant brow, or if he smiled,
 His features quick return'd to their first state ;
 Like the tall reed upon the mountain top, 315
 Which when the breeze sweeps over it, reclines,
 To mount again. He thought of Sigbert now,
 And his long absence. Every secret hope,
 That yet Alswitha lived, forsook his heart ;
 And he was sad and silent ! When a noise 320
 Came from without, and as he rais'd his eye,
 Sigbert, to his astonishment, appear'd !

' I need not ask the news,' the King exclaim'd,
 ' I see thy face ! but, heaven endue my mind
 ' With strength to bear its burden. Speak thou on ! 325
 ' And tell thy tale howe'er calamitous.'
 Sigbert replied, ' Oh, best of kings, I bring
 ' Poor tidings for thee. Would that I were dead,
 ' For to behold thy countenance, to me,
 ' Is worse than death.' — 330

Alfred look'd up and said ;
 ' Thou dost mistake me, Sigbert ! I can bear
 ' All that thou hast to say. Now let me know
 ' The *worst* ! for, not to know, might try indeed
 ' My resolution.' Sigbert spake ; ' O. king, 335
 ' Pardon my failure ! little have I learn'd
 ' Of thy good queen, Alswitha !' ' Hast thou heard

Aught of her?' cried the king. Sigbert replied,
 'Something I have obtain'd. Astonish'd hear!
 'I have been made a pris'ner! I have met,
 Guthrum, the Danish chief, and but escaped
 'To bear a threat to thee!'—Alfred replied,
 Eager, uprising, 'Dost thou mock thy king?
 'But if thy mind be serious, tell thy tale!
 'And tho' I speak to thee, answer me not
 'Till thou hast ended.'

Sigbert thus began :

'Leaving the grove where late I saw my king,
 'Full many an hour I wander'd, and a man
 'Met not these eyes, save one poor cottager,
 'His home forsaking, from the Danes, who spread
 'Terrors around! Now night was drawing near,
 'And in the dim horizon, I could see
 'Surrounding fires—the Foe! whose brands destroy'd
 'Thy subjects' habitations. Thro' my frame,
 'Crept horror, and descending from a hill,
 'Where the fierce north-wind blew, I saw a pile,
 'What once had been an abbey; now o'ergrown
 'With moss and ivy. To the spot I hied
 'For nightly shelter. As I enter'd in,
 'I heard a voice, and looking round, beheld,
 'A woman, fleeing! Fast I followed her,
 'And bade her answer, if she aught had heard,
 'Whether for life or death, of one, unknown,
 'A female, who, when Glastonbury fell,
 'There sojourn'd;—with no pompous servitude,
 'Yet Alfred's queen. I told her, by thy grace,
 'I now inquired her fate.—The woman look'd—
 'Wild, and o'erpower'd with something at her heart;
 'When thus she cried: Good warrior, I have heard
 'A rumour that Alswitha lives, but more
 'Ask not to know. Forth, lead me to the king!
 'To him alone will I my tale declare.

'Pleased with the dawn of hope, I eager cried, 375
 'Haste thou with me. Erelong shalt thou behold
 'Alfred our monarch. As we journey'd on
 'To seek thee here—Oh, miserable man!
 'We met the Danes! an army, led by one,
 'Old, but most fierce to look on, Guthrum named, 380
 'And soon the host drew near. Needless to tell
 'All that was talk'd and threaten'd, 'tis enough
 'To say that like a Saxon, undismay'd,
 'I saw my fate, deem'd sure, and that I then
 'Pleaded my master's cause. Full plain he saw 385
 'I fear'd him not, and when he drew his sword
 'To slay me, something check'd his hand; he cried,
 'Rise prostrate Saxon! I will spare thy life—
 'Convey this message to thy haughty king.'

What were his words? Alfred exclaim'd, 'Tell each! 390
 'If thou would'st hear indeed his very words,'
 Sigbert replied, 'this was his lofty taunt:—
 'Saxon, inform thy king, where'er he be,
 'One certain fate awaits him. Tell him I,
 'Guthrum the Danish chief, am hastening now 395
 'Toward Kenwith, where the trembling Oddune lies,
 'And starves for succour; whilst around the walls,
 'Hubba, my prince, encamps. I thither go
 'To vanquish that proud Saxon, and to dogs
 'His carcass cast, when, by the Gods on high, 400
 'By Odin, Thor, and Freya, and the race
 'Of matchless deities, who throng thy halls,
 'O, Valhall! we will hunt thy monarch out,
 'And if this land contain him, whether hid
 'In glen or cavern, wood or mountain bare, 405
 'These swords shall find, and these exultant eyes
 'Gaze on his mangled corse.'

Alfred replied,
 'My God hath given the stars their course, and fix'd

'The bounds of ocean, when he raves, and dares 410
 'All but Omnipotence, and that same God
 'Will, to my bitter foes, the Danes, appoint
 'A bound impassable! They shall not rule!
 'They shall not Oddune slay! They shall not yet,
 'Spoil to the uttermost this goodly land, 415
 'For there is one in Heaven!—Now, tell thy tale!'

Sigbert again: 'I thank'd the Dane and said,
 'But let this woman bear me company.
 'Thus he replied, with an indignant frown,
 'Thy life I give thee, but, presumptuous man! 420
 'No more require, or by the powers above,
 'Here shalt thou lie, a spectacle, to tell
 'What rashness merits.' Madness had it been
 'For Sigbert to contend; so with the Dane
 'The woman journey'd.' 425

With distraction wild

Alfred exclaim'd—'Doth my Alswitha live?
 'Oh no! Delusive thought! Can it be true?—
 'This hard uncertainty, these doubts and fears,
 'Alternate jarring, so consume my heart, 430
 'That it were merciful to know indeed
 'That she *were* dead! yet, any thing with life!
 'Art thou still living?—She is gone, who knew
 'Tidings of her I honour!' Alfred now
 Stood motionless, when Sigbert thus again. 435

'One thing had near escaped me; ere she pass'd,
 'From her fair neck she took these pearls, and said,
 'With faltering voice, 'If in hereafter times
 'Thou e'er should'st see, one who remembers these,
 'Declare, that she who own'd them, now endures 440
 'The hard captivity.' When Sigbert placed
 The pearls before his monarch. At the sight,
 Sudden he starts! and feeble utterance gave—
 'That woman was Alswitha!'

Alfred stood, 445

While twenty times the crow might flap his wing,
Trembling in fixed amazement!—Now to find
Alswitha lived, yet, by the hostile Dane
Borne from his sight, a dark uncertain joy
Gave to the king ; like what he feels, the man— 450
Shipwreck'd, and clinging fast to oar or spar,
Who 'scapes the angry surge, and when at length
The crag he climbs, finds, with the bitter pang,
That he alone survives of all the crew.

' Alswitha !' cried the king, ' I never more 455
' Shall see thee, nor the music of thy voice
' Hear, and rejoice at !' Alfred spake again :
' Sigbert, declare as thou hast faith in Heaven,
' What said the Dane, and what Alswitha said ?
' Declare each word !'—Sigbert thus answer made : 460
' In that disastrous hour I little knew
' For whom I pleaded ! When I freedom claim'd
' For her, unknown, the wrathful Dane replied,
' Saxon away ! Thy pleading speech is vain !
' She shall become my counsellor ; her words 465
' Have so impress'd my mind, that I desire
' To hear her further. (For Alswitha spake
' With most full confidence of that great God
' He dared defy, which made his sinews quake,
' His cheek turn pallid.) She shall go, he cried, 470
' And tell me of that God, the Spirit vast
' Which late she spake of, whom I may compare
' With Odin and our Gods. He further said,
' His soul was awed, that in her he beheld,
' A grace ! a majesty !'— 475

' Tell me no more !'

Alfred exclaim'd, ' but, speak, what said the queen—
' What were Alswitha's words ?' Sigbert replied,
' She answer'd thus, whilst tears bedew'd her cheek :

' Oh warrior, stay me not ! nor thus oppress 480
 ' A poor weak woman. Didst thou know what calls
 ' Sound in mine ear, thou would'st regard my words
 ' And let me harmless pass ; for I have one,
 ' Far off, a husband, who my absence mourns,
 ' And who would die, to hear that I was met 485
 ' By thee, oh chieftain ! and perforce convey'd
 ' He knew not where. Pity my many woes,
 ' And let me call thee blessed.'

Alfred cried,

' This soothes me ! Now proceed !' Sigbert again : 495
 ' The Dane thus spake, ' Woman thou plead'st in vain,
 ' I never change my purpose. Cease thy fears ;
 ' Thou shalt be cheer'd by one who calls me sire,
 ' By my high-minded Daughter, yonder maid,
 ' Follow'ing from love her father to the wars. 500
 ' My name is Guthrum. Tedious thus to wait.
 ' Mount yonder steed ! and at some future time,
 ' Again thou may'st return and find thy home.
 ' What more she said, oh prince, I must not tell ;
 ' Thou canst not hear it.' Cried the anxious king, 505
 ' Tell me each word ! for never felt this heart
 ' More firm and more collected.' Sigbert said,
 ' These were her words :

' To talk of future hopes

' Were vain indeed ! I have no future hopes ! 510
 ' The bird that for her young flies many a mile,
 ' And now returns to seek them, when she finds
 ' Her treasure gone, her all, her little all,
 ' Gone and no vestige left, feels such as I !
 ' For I am homeward bound, whilst opening joys 515
 ' Made my heart glad, but thou hast marr'd them all,
 ' And life is now a blank, a cheerless void.
 ' So many thoughts now strike my mind, such looks,
 ' So many words she spake of tenderness,
 ' That power miraculous must me have kept 520

‘ From thought and recollection. To myself
‘ Who near her stood, she cried, ‘ Thou yet art free !
‘ One favour do I ask.’ When, from her neck,
‘ She took that string of pearls, of which I spake,
‘ And weeping bade me, if I e’er should meet 525
‘ The man who knew them, of her thus to say :—
‘ She loved her husband ! mourn’d her infant child,
‘ Gone to its fathers.’ ‘ Tell him,’ she exclaim’d,
‘ If e’er he see me living, he shall find
‘ My heart still pure, and if, far off, I died, 530
‘ To pity one, who with her latest breath
‘ Call’d on her husband, and from Heaven implored
‘ Blessings on him and his.’—Alfred replied,
‘ This is indeed too searching. Now retire :
‘ To-morrow I shall see thee !’ 535

Sigbert heard,

And left the king to loneliness and night.

A L F R E D :

BOOK IX .

ARGUMENT.

CEOLRIC'S return and narration ; Bands from Wessex reach the camp.
Consultation of Alfred with his chiefs. Sigbert rebuked for the violence
of his spirit. An attempt to burn the Danish fleet resolved on.

Soon as the dawn appear'd, to Alfred's door,
Sigbert approach'd and enter'd. Pacing slow
He saw the King, who, wild of look, exclaim'd :
' Sigbert, my plan is fix'd ! This arm shall meet
' Guthrum the Dane ! This sword contend for her 5
' Whom he hath made a captive ! I must first
' Rescue Alswitha ; seek her dwelling out,
' Then dare the conflict.—No ! I do mistake !
' My country first ! Oh Sigbert ! in my mind
' Such jarring resolutions come and go, 10
' That I am now like one whom thought hath left,
' And manly fortitude.'

Sigbert replied,
' Early this morn, a man approach'd our fort—
' A stranger, and inquired for thee ; his name, 15
' Ceolric.' ' What ! Ceolric ?' Alfred cried,
' Bid him our presence seek.' Sigbert retired,
And now Ceolric enters : when the king

Drew near the cottager, and thus began :

‘ I joy to see thee ! Often have I dwelt, 20

‘ With deep solicitude, on many a toil,

‘ And peril unsuspected, thou might’st meet

‘ In this thy journey. Welcome here ! but say,

‘ How doth brave Oddune fare ?’

Ceolric spake. 25

‘ I travelled on, O, king, from Ethelney,

‘ Cautious, and soon arrived where proudly rose

‘ The castle Kenwith. Towering high it stands,

‘ Firm as the rock on which it rests itself.

‘ Now to a neighbouring hill I sped, and found 30

‘ The Danes encamped at hand. As thus I watch’d,

‘ Trembling, yet confident, I saw the foe—

‘ March to the castle wall with swords and bows,

‘ And the long spear, the ladder and the torch.

‘ They came beneath ! I saw the assault commence ! 35 .

‘ Then in my heart I shook, and felt cold dew

‘ Start from my brow, thinking the hour was come,

‘ When Oddune, and his gallant host, must feel—

‘ Death near at hand. I view’d, in dread array,

‘ Danes mount the walls, but what delight was mine, 40

‘ When on the battlements, distinct I saw

‘ The Saxon’s busier sword. And now the Danes

‘ Fell to the ground. I saw them fall, and seem’d

‘ With mine own arm to force them to the earth ;

‘ At length, discomfited, the enemy 45

‘ In rage retired.—The castle well I mark’d,

‘ And on the topmost tower there stood a man

‘ Looking methought for succour. Many an hour

‘ I watch’d him from the hill, and there he gazed

‘ Now eastward, and then west, and north, and south, 50

‘ Alternate ; and when eve came on, I saw,

‘ Clear in the light horizon—darkening slow,

‘ His head the latest object, looking still

‘ For hourly aid.’ Alfred aloud exclaim’d,

- ‘ And he shall soon behold me ;—speak thou on ! ’ 55
 Ceolric spake :—
- ‘ Now night was drawing near,
 ‘ And from the hill I hasten’d, whilst a thought,
 ‘ That made my brow look solemn, troubled me.—
 ‘ I knew my danger, yet remembering well 60
 ‘ The import of thy charge, I strove to feel
 ‘ Like him who fears his God, and serves his King.
 ‘ From the high hill I mark’d a certain spot,
 ‘ Where, as I fondly thought, I might approach,
 ‘ Unnoticed, to the frowning battlements. 65
 ‘ This spot I safe attained ; when from beneath,
 ‘ I look’d and feebly cried, Lend me your aid,
 ‘ Good Saxons ! ’ All was still. I then again
 ‘ Call’d louder, ‘ Aid me,’ but a certain dread
 ‘ So check’d my voice, that I could hardly hear 70
 ‘ Myself say, ‘ Aid me ! ’ Chilling blew the wind.
 ‘ The night was dark and stormy, and I stood,
 ‘ Trembling, whilst many a fear assail’d my heart.
 ‘ As pondering thus, I heard some drawing near,
 ‘ And by their speech perceived that they were Danes ! 75
 ‘ Close underneath the wall I stretch’d myself,
 ‘ And heard them passing whisper, ‘ We shall soon
 ‘ Conquer this stubborn Saxon. Not one soul—
 ‘ Shall live to tell what he endured to save
 ‘ This castle for his master. Tho’ we fail’d— 80
 ‘ On the past day, when, with full confidence,
 ‘ We dared the walls, yet that discomfiture,
 ‘ Tho’ hard to bear, shall on the second morn,
 ‘ From this good time, when we the fight renew,
 ‘ Inspire new ardour. We the sacrifice 85
 ‘ Ere long shall offer up ; there then shall need
 ‘ No Valkyries ¹¹⁶ to determine who shall fall,
 ‘ For every Saxon’s blood shall drench the ground !
 ‘ This portion of the wall, shall next sustain
 ‘ The Danish onset. Toward the wall they strode, 90

'And eyed it well. I thought they touch'd me! still,
 'Lay I and trembled, when, a whizzing dart
 'Came from above! Discover'd fast they fled.
 'Now, to the man above who hurl'd the shaft,
 'Rising, I cried, 'Saxon! a friend is near!' 95
 'When o'er the ramparts leaning, one exclaim'd,
 'What voice is that? Speak, or this iron lance
 'Shall pierce thy heart.' Earnest, I him address'd,
 'I am thy brother Saxon! Stay thy hand,
 'And listen to me! Then he stay'd his hand. 100
 'He cried, 'Thy name!' I answer'd, I am come
 'With tidings to thy chieftain, from our king!
 'When thus the Saxon, 'Speed thou to the gate!'
 'Unnoticed, I approach'd it. He with joy
 'Led me toward Oddune. 105
 'Night was far advanced,
 'And as the hall I enter'd, I, the chief
 'With many a noble warrior, earnest saw,
 'Held in deep converse.' Oddune thus began:
 'Thy business? stranger!' 'Doubt me not, I said: 110
 'I bear a message from our king! He look'd,
 'And each around him, eager, and so still
 'All seem'd at once, that I the sudden hush
 'Felt in my heart, and every word I spake
 'Seem'd to recoil upon myself. I cried; 115
 'Alfred our king is safe! He knows thy state,
 'And soon, to thy relief, will hither come,
 'Leading a host of men, resolv'd to die
 'Or rescue thee, oh chieftain!' Oddune cried,
 'Withhold awhile!' and suddenly uprose. 120
 'His breath was laboured, and he stalk'd along,—
 'I never saw such strides, and such wild looks!
 'But soon he stopped, and said, 'Thanks to our God!
 'We shall not starve! Now, stranger, speak thou on!
 'I then declared all that thou bad'st me say; 125
 'Telling thy fix'd resolve; that Selwood's shade

' Was the resort of Saxons, and that soon,
 ' Kenwith would see the royal banner near.'
 ' When Oddune rose, and shouted, ' We shall yet
 ' Live to behold our king ! right manfully 130
 ' Will we defend these walls.' Such fearful joy
 ' Sparkling in every eye, I oft have heard—
 ' Hath been, yet never saw ; for to my mind
 ' They seem'd like idiots, laughing now aloud,
 ' And walking to and fro, confused, then fix'd 135
 ' And pondering with stern brow ! but soon I saw
 ' It was excess of gladness, for tho' wild,
 ' They were most gentle. Oddune thus declared :
 ' Friends, I partake your transport. Now our hearts
 ' Beat high with exultation, but, our joy, 140
 ' Prudence must temper, and the certainty
 ' That succour fast approaches, arm our minds
 ' With deeper caution. Flee each to his post !
 ' Instruct the sentinels ! Watch well from far
 ' The little cloud of danger. Triumph soon 145
 ' All shall partake !'

Turning to me he said,

' I thank thee, stranger ! Haste thou to the king ;
 ' Convey our gratulations, and assure
 ' The best of monarchs, nothing will we leave 150
 ' Undone to serve him, here within these walls,
 ' Or in hereafter times. Tell thou the king,
 ' Our hearts are good. Tho' many a pressing doubt
 ' Hath troubled us, one foe alone we fear'd,—
 ' The waster famine ! Tell him we rejoice 155
 ' To learn his resolution. Bid him hold
 ' No anxious cares for us ; we yet have food
 ' For many days.'—When Alfred, rising, cried,
 ' For many days did our brave Oddune say ?
 ' That many day's provision he had left ? 160
 ' Then is he safe ! I yet shall see his face !
 ' Speak on !'—Ceolric answer'd : ' I, the chief,

'Told of the hostile threats which I had heard
 'When 'neath the walls, and of the second charge
 'He might expect from Hubba, on the morn, 165
 'Next to that coming. Me the warrior thank'd,
 'With true and hearty zeal, when I retired,
 'And through the gate escaping sought thee here.'

Alfred replied, 'Brave man, receive my praise!
 'Thou hast perform'd, with zeal, thy perilous part, 170
 'And I will well reward thee. Now return,
 'Back to thy home. I do not tell thee yet
 'My resolutions, but, to Ethelney,
 'Speed on, and wait my summons. Thou wilt know
 'For what I send thee, when within thy cot 175
 'Thou enterest, for a pearl is there, whose price,
 'Words may not name—but, guard it as thy life!
 Ceolric cried: 'That I have served thy cause,
 'Yields me the pleasure which I fain would speak,
 'But cannot; my imperfect words are few, 180
 'Yet spring they from a heart, which thou may'st trust
 'With all thou hast at Ethelney. Farewell!'

Alfred exclaim'd, 'Sigbert, what shouts are those?
 'Methinks of exultation. Haste! Inquire!
 Sigbert withdrew awhile, and now return'd, 185
 Leading a chief, who thus the king address'd.—
 'At thy command, O monarch! we set forth
 'To warn thy subjects, and inspire again
 'Each languid heart with hope, when, as we reach'd
 'The skirts of this vast forest, we beheld 190
 'Exulting bands advance—Wessex' brave sons,
 'Hast'ning to serve their king. They all had heard,
 'O'erwhelmed with sorrow, that their noble prince,
 '(Indignant grown at that disastrous spirit—
 'That languid, cowardly, and prostrate heart, 195
 'Which o'er the land prevail'd,) had left his troops,

' His few and faithful foll'wers, and retired
 ' From War to Solitude ; resolved that those
 ' Who would not fight, when freedom call'd to arms,
 ' Should groan with slav'ry. At the news, there spread 200
 ' Throughout all Wessex, faithful still to thee,
 ' One general panic, one unfeign'd concern,
 ' That roused them from their slumbers, and awoke
 ' The patriot's feelings. Through the Western Land,
 ' Alfred ! and War !' was heard : whilst, now, without, 205
 ' Wessex' first levies stand, brave companies,
 ' Who but precede their brethren, hastening fast
 ' To join their king, and follow where he leads.'

Alfred the tidings heard, and hastens forth
 With heart exultant. At his sight, the air 210
 Teems with loud acclamations. He essay'd
 T' address his subjects, but, more vain the task
 Than his, amid the fury of the storm,
 Who would some distant mariner forewarn
 Of fatal rock, to which he onward drives. 215
 He stood, but still the shout, ' Long live the king !'
 Rang through the air, and when, awhile, it ceas'd,
 So solemn was the silence, and so loud
 The deaf'ning noise that follow'd, that it seem'd
 Like the deep calm, that, o'er the western world, 220
 Strikes on the ear, when the fierce Hurricane
 Retires, a little space, then sounds afresh,
 With huger peal, and more exalted wrath,
 Roaring along the firmament. At length,
 The clamour died away, when, thus, the king. 225

' Brave men, I hail you ! Grateful to my heart
 ' Are ye, O, subjects, in this hour of need.
 ' To dare the war, to meet th' insulting Dane,
 ' In one grand struggle, late had I resolved,
 ' Supported by the few who faithful were : 230

'For this I hither sped; and, to behold,
 'As at this moment, Wessex pour her sons
 'Around my standard—hosts whom I had deem'd,
 '(Most wrongfully) lost to their country's cause,
 'Assures me, that this struggle shall conduct 235
 'To peace and liberty. Let others shrink,
 'Inglorious from the conflict, to herself,
 'If Wessex be but true, altho' her ranks
 'May not with Danes compare, yet shall her zeal
 'Furnish new armies, troops invincible, 240
 'And compensate for each deficiency,
 'By her own courage. When the British spirit,
 'Like the roused lion, at the voice of war,
 'Rises in all his majesty of strength,
 'His eye is lightning, thunder is his voice, 245
 'His sword is pestilence, which in its course
 'Withers the mighty, and, in vengeance drest,
 'Spreads terrors, that might hold a world at bay.'

Amid the general shout, 'long live the king!'
 Alfred his chieftains call'd. They crowd around; 250
 When, thus, the king: 'To view the first faint dawn
 'Of that returning spirit, which once sway'd
 'Our brave forefathers, raises in my breast
 'Tumultuous happiness. What further bands,
 'In freedom's cause, from Wessex may arrive, 255
 'Will serve our cause hereafter, but, declare!
 'Placed as we are, what course must we pursue,
 'With instant execution? Now to pause
 'Might plunge us in despair.'

A chieftain thus. 260
 'Since Mercia, 'wakened from her lethargy,
 'And now arous'd, hath promis'd us support,
 'With her brave warriors, would it not be wise
 'To stay the hour of action, 'till these men
 'Draw near to aid us?' Alfred rose and cried, 265

'Beware of baseless hopes, those unseen rocks,
 'Leagued with perdition! Mercia vows again
 'To send us succours—but, too well, we know
 'What Mercia's vows are!—Doth she, to her wrongs,
 'Add insults, in this last extremity, 270
 'By plighting oaths afresh? Degenerate race!
 'We have believed too long! Now be our trust
 'Dependent on ourselves! This be our hope—
 'Brave warriors, this our only confidence!'

Another rose, and Alfred thus address'd; 275
 'If I may speak, O king! I will express
 'The language of sincerity, tho' not,
 'Haply, of wisdom. This would I advise.
 'Let us advance, down to the southern shore,
 'With march precipitous, and bravely dare 280
 'Ivar, to meet the war; so shall our swords
 'Subdue one half the Danes, before they join
 'Hubba the fierce, and thro' our suffering land
 'Wide-wasting ruin spread.'—Silence ensued,
 'When Sigbert rose. 'Since liberty is given, 285
 'And all are free to speak, I must declare
 'My opposition. Let us not depart
 'Down to the southern shore, but instant speed
 'To seek the Danish army! Let us haste,
 'And Hubba meet, that chieftain at whose name, 290
 'The babe upon its mother's breast turns pale,—
 'Feeling instinctive terror. Let us count
 'The moments² till the fight, and when it comes,
 'Call to our standard, havoc; bid each flower,
 'And herb, and lofty tree, all nurture scorn, 295
 'But Danish blood, that soon shall flow so fast
 'And in such living torrents, that the rain
 'Awhile may stay itself, and nature wear
 'A garb of crimson.'—Each in wonder look'd,
 When Alfred cried, 'your sentiments, oh, chiefs! 300

‘ I wait to hear you.’ One arose and said,
 ‘ What doth our king advise ?’

Alfred thus spake :

‘ Tidings have late arrived from Kenwith’s towers,
 ‘ That Oddune fears not ; nor doth want so press 305
 ‘ Upon our brethren there, that we should yield,
 ‘ Plans of high moment. This your king’s resolve.
 ‘ Soon as the morrow dawns, we will depart,
 ‘ Not to meet Ivar, but to burn his fleet.
 ‘ To waste the Danish navy ; to prevent 310
 ‘ The foe’s escape, when by our arms o’erpower’d
 ‘ He flies before our onslaught, and again
 ‘ Trusts to his barks. Cut off, and circumscribed
 ‘ By Saxon might, the tiger-hearted Danes
 ‘ Must fall before us. Never shall they more, 315
 ‘ As they were wont in adverse circumstance,
 ‘ Speed to their hovering ships, to pour afresh,
 ‘ In some more favouring moment on our shores,
 ‘ Their aggravated wrath. The time is come
 ‘ When, in dread struggle, man with man must strive. 320
 ‘ Our clift-bound isle in this tremendous hour,
 ‘ Shall hem them in ; so may they learn, too late,
 ‘ How terrible, when roused, is Saxon wrath.’

The instant Alfred ended, shouts arose,
 ‘ The fleet ! The fleet ! There let our vengeance rest.’ 325
 Nor hail’d they Alfred’s words, with common form
 Of placid acceptation, but like men
 Who know their lives and welfare jointly hang
 On that which they determine. Alfred thus,
 ‘ Vet’rans, on whom our country’s hopes depend, 330
 ‘ Upon the coming morn, our march begins.’
 When calling Sigbert, thus alone he spake.

‘ Regard me, Sigbert ! I am one who loves,
 ‘ The heart that meditates on truth, the tongue

'That dares declare it. Much I prize thy worth, 335
 'Thy many services, and hope ere long
 'To make thee recompense, yet must I name
 'The thing condemn'd, tho' in my dearest friend.
 'Thy soul is filled with hatred and blind wrath;—
 'His deadliest foe, the christian never hates— 340
 'Sigbert thy mind is poison'd; thou dost thirst,
 'With craving appetite, for Danish blood,—
 'Not for the good it yields, but, to appease
 'Vengeance unbridled, and supreme revenge.
 'Thy wrongs are great! My wrongs are manifold! 345
 'Yet let us not exclude that holy light,—
 'Truth, from our minds. Have not the Danes some wrongs
 'To vex their spirits? Our Northumbrian prince,
 'Amid his castle's caverns, deep and dark,
 'Murder'd the Danish king?—the very sire 350
 'Of these our fierce invaders? Let this thought,
 'Not quench our zeal, nor stay our arm in fight;
 'But in the hour of triumph, calm our wrath.
 'Sigbert, with me thou must not wage the war,¹¹⁶
 'Thou hast profess'd thyself, singled of heaven
 'To bear glad tidings and good-will to men!— 355
 'How cam'st thou by that garb? A calling thine,
 'When in faith chosen, and with zeal fulfill'd—
 'Most dignified, and first of human kind!
 'Henceforth respect thy sacred character!
 'And, not the least of noble purposes, 360
 'Increase thy learning; strive, with me, to raise
 'Thy country, from its state of abjectness,
 'To the high port which Wisdom gives her sons.¹¹⁷

Sigbert astonish'd heard. His face now glow'd,
 Now pale appear'd, whilst in his mind arose 365
 Conflicting passions; when he cried, 'Oh king!
 'Dost thou indeed declare, that I must leave
 'My sword, and my good armour; shun the fight,

‘ And never, from this moment, more rejoice
 ‘ O’er vanquish’d Dane ?’ Silent, he stood awhile, 370
 Then thus again. ‘ Monarch thy words are just !
 ‘ They well accord with something at my heart,—
 ‘ An inward monitor, which in the hour,
 ‘ Dispassionate, approves what now thou say’st :
 ‘ Yet I am desolate. Each friend I loved, 375
 ‘ These Danes have slain ! Shall I, like coward, crouch
 ‘ In low, base abjectness, and court the foe
 ‘ To murder, unresisted ?—see the Danes,
 ‘ Thick as the solar atom, scattering round
 ‘ All plagues, yet sheathe my sword ? My very soul 380
 ‘ Revolts at these thy words ! I cannot check
 ‘ This loathing of all mercy ! I must live,
 ‘ In fix’d and undistinguishable hate !

Alfred replied, in slow and solemn tone,
 ‘ Thou know’st not of what texture thou art made. 385
 ‘ Thy many wrongs have so disturb’d thy thoughts,
 ‘ So warm’d thy faculties, that thou dost see
 ‘ Plain things confused. Sigbert, before thee lie
 ‘ Two paths ; declare thy choice ! Be thou henceforth
 ‘ Devoted to thy God ; resign the thought 390
 ‘ Avenging, and put on the ornament—
 ‘ Accordant with thy calling ; shew thyself
 ‘ Prepared to teach, by having first been taught ;
 ‘ Or, else, renounce thy sacred character !
 ‘ Throw off the hypocrite ! confess thyself 395
 ‘ The slave of hate, and all the passions, fierce,
 ‘ Rude nature groans beneath ; then wield thy sword,
 ‘ Not for the end, but for the thirst of blood !
 ‘ This thou may’st do, yet know the recompence !
 ‘ It is the scoff of men, the frown of God ! 400
 ‘ In me it is becoming thus to say,
 ‘ For Heaven hath rais’d me up, howe’er unfit,
 ‘ To govern this his people, and to see

‘ His teachers pure ; and never will I view
‘ Heaven’s ministers, clothed in the garb of war. 405
‘ Discard the priesthood ! or, renounce the sword !’

Sigbert amaz’d, look’d up, then earnest cried,
‘ With deep conviction I thy words approve.
‘ I cannot wield the sword, and still retain
‘ The spirit Heaven approves ; yet do I feel 410
‘ Hatred so deeply fix’d, and in my heart
‘ Such wrath, such cravings, not to be subdued,
‘ That I *must* grasp the sword.”

Alfred replied,
‘ I hear thy resolution ! Yielding thus 415
‘ Thy sacerdotal robe, thou now shalt have
‘ Station of trust, where thou may’st hence display
‘ Due courage, and promote thy country’s weal.
‘ Forth for the march prepare ! The hour draws on,
‘ When Denmark’s fleet shall stream with Saxon fires.’ 420

A L F R E D :

B O O K X.

ARGUMENT.

ALFRED'S interview with a Witch.—The burning of the Danish Fleet.

BEFORE the morn arrived, Sigbert arose,
With thought distracted. Thro' night's silent hours
Sleepless he lay, revolving o'er and o'er
On Alfred's words and gestures; with their barbs
Piercing his heart. Each sentence which he spake, 5
Impress'd his mind with such strong characters
That oft he half forgot them, and the cares,
Of late so terrible, seem'd in oblivion lost :
Then, like some tide or ocean long embank'd
That bursts its barriers—fierce—impetuous, 10
Casting its world of waters o'er the land,
In Sigbert's feverish mind, the monarch's voice
Resistless enter'd, scorning the weak bound
Of human will.

Now Alfred's words seem'd harsh, 15
And with resentment Sigbert view'd them o'er,
Till something gently whisper'd in his ear
Of the forbearing spirit, and kind heart
Which Christian priest became. He thought again
On what his mind once was, the seat of peace 20

Of lowliness, that could at eve and morn,
 Respect that precept, 'Love thine enemies,'
 And say, with fervent utt'rance, 'If there be
 'Those who despise me, pardon them, Oh Lord !'
 But in his heart he felt that time was gone. 25
 Whilst musing thus, the sudden thought arose
 Of many a friend gone down to death, like fruit
 Untimely cast to earth. He felt a glow
 Pervade his cheek, and as he upward look'd,
 And cried, 'Oh grant me, righteous Heaven, thy fires, 30
 'That I may blast these Danes !' Turning, he saw
 Alfred, beholding ! Sigbert's mind then felt
 As tho' some spirit watch'd him from the sky,—
 With awful majesty. Or like the man,
 Sleeping on earth, who, when the night draws near, 35
 Sudden awakes, and sees the full-orbed moon
 Upon his face, gazing in quietness.

Alfred, the mild rebuke thus tender'd him.
 'Sigbert, thy head is wrong, thy heart is right.
 'Thou'rt like the snow, fast falling to the earth, 40
 'Darken'd, when upward view'd, but light below.
 'With thoughts uneasy, sleep deriding us,
 'We two, the earliest, hail the ruddy dawn.
 'Haste, rouse the troops ! We now must buckle on
 'Once more our armour, seize again the sword, 45
 'Direct the hostile weapon, and implore
 'Heaven's blessing on th' exploit that lies before.'—
 Like the gay lark, which on an April morn
 Forsakes his nest, while yet the sun is hid,
 And nature dim and silent, as his note 50
 Awakes the feather'd tribes, and makes the air
 Ring with their warblings, so at Alfred's voice,
 Out from their tents, impatient, pour'd his troops,
 In exultation, and wild vehemence,
 Greeting their monarch. Thus he welcomed them. 55

'Subjects, I joy to see you ! When the light
 'First streaks the east, we know that morn is nigh,
 'And now your hearts are roused, I see, at hand,
 'The first faint dawn of our prosperity.
 'To burn the Danish fleet is our design, 60
 'Not to provoke the fight. Five hundred men
 'Now do I take. The rest, till we return,
 'Prepare the means of war.'—Th' appointment made ;
 Alfred inquires, 'If all to waste the foe
 Felt their hearts ready?' Each his sword uprais'd, 65
 And clash'd his shield. When Alfred cried, 'Oh God !
 'Thou art our confidence ;' and onward march'd.

Thoughts of approaching scenes now o'er their brow
 Cast the stern look. Silent they moved along,
 Save that the steady tread of multitudes, 70
 Heard ever, sounded like the gushing noise
 Made by some bark upon the ocean wide,
 In calm and quiet weather, when the air
 Gives but one sound—the parting of the waves.—
 Long time they march'd, and pleasant was the sight, 75
 When passing through the towns and villages,
 Shadows of what they were, now fall'n, or burnt,
 To see the aged by the road-way side,
 Creep from their sack'd and shattered tenements,
 (The local fondness lingering at their heart) 80
 The cripple and the fatherless, the maim'd,
 The mother, and her children, stand to bless,
 As to the wars they pass'd, their noble king
 And his brave followers. Entering now a wood,
 With toil o'ercome, beneath the spreading trees, 85
 The sun unclouded, they awhile recline,
 The better to recruit their strength, and nerve,
 Their spirits for fresh labour.

Whilst they lay
 Stretch'd in their sylvan bower, with solemn look, 90

Portentous of revealment tragical,

Sigbert drew near, and Alfred thus addressed.

‘Most gracious king, there is a witch¹¹⁸ at hand !

‘Believe thy servant. Wand’ring thro’ this wood,

‘Late in a musing hour, with fears aroused,

95

‘I saw her in her moss-clad hut, alone,

‘Her imp beside her, of the feline form—

‘Two centuries old, or more. Most noble king !

‘Shall I conduct thee to her secret haunt ?’

Alfred replied, ‘Sigbert, tho’ strange it seem,

100

Truth lies beneath—Thou hast much lore to learn,

‘And much to unlearn, ere thou wilt be wise.

‘Thine are the idle, weak and wandering dreams,

‘Which, hearing, we might smile at, not deride,

‘But for their baneful influence on man’s heart.’

105

‘Most noble king,’ Sigbert astonish’d cried,

‘As from my inmost spirit I believe,

‘No one endued with proper faculties

‘Could look upon her brown and haggard form

‘And doubt one moment, that she is, full true,

110

‘A witch malign.’—Alfred thus answer made.

‘She may be old and feeble, and strange tales

‘Folly may of her tell, but wisdom spurns

‘These idle fancies. Mark me, whilst our bands

‘Refresh their weary limbs, I would an hour

115

‘Steal from anxiety, to see and hear

‘This form terrific ! Speed thou on thy way.’

Alfred and Sigbert seek the witch at hand.

Upon the borders of the forest deep,

Her dwelling stood, of turf and osiers made ;

120

The roof o’ergrown with ivy, weeds, and moss,

Confused and wild, uncurb’d from year to year,

Half green, half grey ;—scarce human dwelling-place.

They glimpse the form of import terrible!
 There by her crazy door, on three-legged stool, 125
 The beldame sat—courting the breeze, that play'd
 Amid her few white tresses; silence round—
 Save where the throstle gave his sprightly song.
 Against her rugged staff, with back upraised,
 Her one companion, sabler than the night, 130
 Came purring, forward now, now back again,
 Pressing alternate sides,—with happiness,—
 Felt, and by touch of sympathy convey'd.
 'Behold her!' Sigbert said, 'There sits the hag!—
 'Fearful, of might unknown, weaving her spells 135
 'And leagued with powers infernal. Take thou care
 'Not to arouse her ire, for she hath means,
 'And habitudes—of a mysterious kind,
 'And with a look—can, to decrepitude,
 'Wither the stoutest frame.' 140

They reach the spot.'

Touch'd for old age, so lone and comfortless,
 When pity needing most, by most denied,
 Alfred, with soothing voice, the dame address'd;
 (She striving to rise up, from courtesy, 145
 The king with gentle hand, slow press'd her down.)
 Accosting thus the aged solitaire.

'Nay, rise not, mother. Forms, I heed them not.—
 'For curious spirit, wilt thou pardon me? 150
 'Thou hast repute for necromantic arts,
 'And intercourse with things unlawful. Say!
 'What is this power of thine, in myst'ry veil'd,
 'Filling with dread obscure the country round?'

The feeble wreck of generations past, 155
 Thus answer'd. 'Master, in thy look and voice,
 'There is a something that e'en whispers me,
 'Not all are hostile, and, if possible,

' I should e'en think that I beheld a friend.
 ' Trust me, no power is mine—injurious things 160
 ' To heap on mortals, Would that all around
 ' Display'd the honest frankness thou dost show,
 ' That I might understand, and vindicate
 ' This aged head from falsehoods; but, there are
 ' Who deal their blows in darkness, and resolve 165
 ' What *shall* be, not what *is*, their will the truth;—
 ' What fancy dictates. Stranger, trust my words!
 ' No arts are mine. Blessings I fain would shower,
 ' Rather than curses—on my bitterest foes,
 ' And I have many such.—Toward man or beast 170
 ' No wish of harm hath harbour'd in this breast—
 ' From youth to these grey hairs. My only crime—
 ' Is this,—my sallow look,—my silvery lock,—
 ' My tottering step, and this poor thing that purs,—
 ' The sole companion that adheres to me, 175
 ' And tells me, choicest cordial of my heart!
 ' 'Mid strangers all, one friend is faithful still!

Adown her furrow'd cheek—the slow tear steals!
 When Alfred, turning, thus to Sigbert spake.
 ' What say'st thou to this dweller in the woods? 180
 ' Thou answerest not! Confusion in thy face
 ' Sits manifest. Learn wisdom, and behold—
 ' In superstition—that disastrous foe
 ' Which quenches pity, and the genial stream
 ' That cheers, and warms, and fructifies the heart • 185
 ' Turns into deadliest poison!

Now in tones—

Of kindest sympathy, the monarch spake.
 ' Mother! thy lot is hard. Age brings its weight,
 ' But calumny is weightier far than all. 190
 ' One antidote there is, the consciousness
 ' Of charges undeserved, and an appeal—
 ' To him whose judgment errs not.—Thro' this life

' Of strange vicissitudes, thy years have borne
 ' Doubtless, a liberal share ; while distant friends 195
 ' Suspend their toil—under the green-wood tree,
 ' Declare thy sorrows, one *will* pity thee.'
 Feebly and slow, the lonely woman spake.

' My lot is hard indeed, for I am doomed—
 ' Still to live on, when all my friends are dead ; 200
 ' Husband and neighbours. I had once three sons,
 ' Fighting in Alfred's wars.—God bless our king !
 ' But they are dead, the Danes, our country's bane,
 ' Dread scourge ! have slain them ! and I too shall fall,
 ' With all around, if Alfred conquer not. 205
 ' I know how little life has left for me,
 ' And daily feel some monitor of death,
 ' Yet as my years increase, a growing love
 ' Of life increases, for my humble cot
 ' Still has its charms for me. Altho' my limbs 210
 ' Tremble at every breath, and I survive—
 ' A friendless woman, tottering o'er the grave,
 ' The melancholy mother of the dead,
 ' Oh ! blame me not, but pity, if thou canst !
 ' My coward heart still clings to its loved home. 215
 ' A wretched thing it is for age like mine
 ' To lose its recollection, and at eve
 ' To know my sons are slain, and yet at morn
 ' To cherish expectations, and look round,
 ' Eager, to see them ope' my cottage door, 220
 ' 'Till memory comes. But tho' I know them gone,
 ' Fondly I hope 'gainst hope. Delusion vain !
 ' I never more shall see them !—They are dead !—
 ' The feelings these of nature ; in reserve,
 ' I have a hope, to alien hearts unknown.' 225
 After a pause, the woman thus again.

' There is one evil, next in magnitude,

' Adding new sorrows to a burden'd heart.
 ' The hamlets round me, in their cruel spite.
 ' Harbour hard thoughts, and on me heap their scorn ; 230
 ' Eye me askance,—with fiends, as holding converse ;
 ' Regarding me—scarce of the human kind,—
 ' As one, to whom all nature subject lies,
 ' Roaming at will, thro' air, and calling up
 ' Sickness, or murrain ;—charging every ill 235
 ' Befalling them or theirs—upon this head ;—
 ' On me !—who ne'er deprived in wantonness
 ' An insect of the life its maker gave !—
 ' Weep not,' cried Alfred ; ' soon thy cares will end.
 ' There is a better hope !—a better world ! 240
 ' Be this thy consolation !'—Such a glance,
 Casting a gleam of sunshine o'er her face—
 She gave the king,—so manifest of joy
 From unexpected source, that she appear'd
 Old as she was, and hanging on life's verge, 245
 E'en lovely !—showing that the soul retains
 Its pristine rank, and that no outward form
 Wrinkle, or hue ;—the last extreme of age,
 Can hold the spirit captive, in itself
 Young ever,—smiling at the waster—Time. 250

Amid an evil and tumultuous world
 She in her cot had held communion sweet
 With lofty contemplations,—with that state
 The christian's resting-place, which o'er her brow
 A look unearthly cast.—The passing word 255
 Utter'd by Alfred, of congenial kind,
 So unexpected, feelings woke within,
 Repress'd before,—(as the meridian sun,
 Expands the petal, calls the flowret forth.)
 With gladden'd visage, mildly thus she spake. 260
 ' My hope is in the Saviour of the world !—
 ' Say, stranger ! do I err ?'

'Thine is true wisdom. This the stable ground !
 'The rock of ages !—whereon he who stands, 265
 'Unmoved, shall see Decay, with whirlwind rage,
 'Sweep earth, and all its perishable chaff
 'Into oblivion !—whilst this hope remains,
 'Firm as Heaven's pillars and the throne of God !
 'Endure thy burden, worn, disconsolate, 270
 'The bridge is nearly pass'd ! Hold on thy way !
 'Look upward ! Treasures wait thee in the skies !—
 'Duties imperious call me hence. Farewell !'
 Into her wither'd hand he drops the *purse* ¹¹⁹
 And presses it ;—and as she look'd to Heaven— 275
 Alfred and Sigbert haste to other scenes.

While roaming thro' the wood, a vista spreads
 Sudden before them, and distinct they spy—
 Upon a neighbouring hill, with earnest step—
 Warriors ! alike, their name and course unknown ! 280
 'From weapon, and from dress,' Alfred exclaim'd,
 'I judge them Danes. Yon tree I instant climb.'
 Upon the topmost branch he now appears,
 When hastening down he cried, 'Those are the Danes !
 'Perchance the host, just landed on our coast ; 285
 'Led on by Ivar, that disastrous chief,
 'His sword once more t'embrue in Saxon blood !
 'Now speed we back.'

While hastening on their way,—
 Alfred thus spake.—'Sigbert, solemnity 290
 'Reigns at my heart. The danger dread was near !
 'We knew it not. But for the moving tale
 'Of that poor, wrong'd, and suffering woman old,
 'With this our slender band, we might have met
 'The check, at least, I will not say defeat, 295
 'Thro' force unequal ;—thus doth Providence
 'Work out its secret purposes, and make
 'Small things subserve the great.'

' Silence intense prevail'd—when not a sound 335
 ' Save of the leaves, that from the passing breeze
 ' Quiver'd and stopp'd alternate, met the ear.
 When thus again the king.—' Let them combine,
 ' Our present object is the Danish fleet,
 ' Augmented now by Ivar's,—but, ere long, 340
 ' Ordain'd to fill Heaven's concave with their glare.
 ' Now for the southern coast !'

With patient toil,
 The Saxons, stout in their resolve and heart,
 Press'd earnest on. Now, from a lofty hill, 345
 The ocean green they spy, and on the strand,
 Thick as autumnal leaves, the Danish fleet.¹²⁰
 Alfred rejoicing cried, ' That prize is ours !
 ' Behold yon barks, that hither brought our foe—
 ' To waste this isle, and we ourselves to whelm 350
 ' In death or bondage. With yon ships they rove,
 ' Plaguering all lands. Why hath not Britain fleets—
 ' To meet, and to repel these robber Danes ?
 ' But more of this when peace shall bless our isle.¹²¹

Whilst on the hill-top, thoughtful, Alfred gazed, 355
 Sigbert he call'd, and thus the mandate gave.
 ' Speed cautious to the beach. Look well around,
 ' And mark what force protects the enemy.'
 Sigbert the words received, and hasted on.—
 Joy, beaming from his eye.—Back he returns, 360
 And thus exulting cried. ' Rejoice, O king !
 ' There is no foe, no man to meet our swords,
 ' But there are women, numberless ; the wives
 ' Of these our fierce invaders. Children too,
 ' Countless are there, rising, with venom charged, 365
 ' To aid their fathers.'

Alfred heard, nor paused
 Longer if mercy he might shew or not,
 Than doth the running brook which path to take

When stones its course oppose. Aloud he cried, 370
 'Propitious moment! When the brave behold
 'Where to display their brav'ry, fervent joy
 'Makes glad their heart. These women we will spare.
 'We will do justice to ourselves! our swords
 'On men war only. Sad the destiny 375
 'That prompts the warrior's deeds, but when he finds
 'A cheap and bloodless vict'ry, unforeseen;
 'It cheers his heart, like some well water'd spot,
 'Verdant and fair, 'mid Lybia's burning sands,
 'The fainting trav'ler.'—Scarce had Alfred said, 380
 When shouts arose, 'Spare, spare the weak. Our swords
 'Must meet resistance, victory else were shame,'

Now toward the beach they haste. Whilst on their way,
 Speeding o'er neighbouring hill, Alfred espied
 Two Danes escaping. 'Mark them!' he exclaim'd. 385
 'Sigbert, I know thee fleet and resolute.
 'Take with thee whom thou wilt. Haste after them,
 'And when o'ercome, conduct them to our sight :
 'If not arrested, tidings they may bear
 'Injurious to our purpose.'—Sigbert heard, 390
 And bounded on alone.

To those around
 Alfred thus spake: 'Light ye your brands. I lead—
 'To give yon fleet to the devouring flames.'
 Waving the torch, fast to the ships they speed. 395
 These having reach'd, the king with wonder saw
 No bank to guard! no forces to protect!
 'This,' he exclaim'd, 'is Danish confidence!
 'Beholding none to check them, they believed
 'This isle subdued, and every Saxon's sword 400
 'Wrench'd from his grasp. Delusion oft is found
 'Precursor of destruction.'

Alfred now,
 Foremost proceeded to the stranded ships

Bearing the Danish women, and exclaim'd, 405
 'Strangers whence are you?' From a bark uprose
 A woman tall, who to the king drew near,
 And with an eye of fiery meaning cried :
 'First murder me! Saxon behold my heart!'
 The king awhile stood silent, then replied : 410
 'Woman! thy death I seek not,' With wild eye,
 Him she address'd : 'Thou art the Saxon foe!
 'Mercy we ask not, but, to death look on.'
 'Firm as thou seest me! All here await—
 'Slaughter! We are forsaken of our gods— 415
 'Our husbands: let us die! But this I say,
 'I am the wife¹²³ of one renown'd in war,
 'Who, for my death, over this land will spread
 'One sea of gore, whilst Danes to madness stung,
 'Shall hunt thee down to Hela's flaming gates; 420
 'Thee and thy race! Now let the hungry ravens
 'Wade through our blood—Death hath no terrors here!'

By her bold words, rous'd to superior rage,
 Each Danish woman rose, and from the barks
 Look'd eager, waiting undismay'd their end; 425
 Whilst Saxons, thronging round, astonish'd saw
 The look of fury, and the eye that spake—
 Infuriate passion. Alfred thus replied :
 'Rash women, cease! Your lives are safe! Abide,
 'Here, where you are; no harm shall on you light; 430
 'But if you rather seek your husbands, go!
 'Protected here or there. This fleet must fall.
 'But as we war on men, and men alone,
 'The mother and her infant, Saxon wrath
 'Will never light upon. To show you all 435
 'What hearts are ours, not to yourselves alone
 'Safety we grant, your food shall be preserved.
 'The barks that hold it, still shall minister
 'To your requirements, and if aught should fail,

‘ A foe, unsparing, shall replenish it.’ 440

The woman cried, ‘ thou art a gallant chief ! ¹²³
 ‘ Pity it were, methinks, to see thee fall,
 ‘ As soon thou must, before the sword, whose edge,
 ‘ Keen as the icy blast, thou knowest not.
 ‘ Here will we, waiting, mark the fiery brand.— 445
 ‘ Devour and spoil !’

The king, to those around,
 Turning, thus spake. ‘ Vet’rans, regard your prince !
 ‘ No man of Saxon blood, howe’er provok’d,
 ‘ Will lift his hand ’gainst woman. Such are safe, 450
 ‘ Alike in war or peace.—Cowards, alone,
 ‘ (Unworthy the ennobling name of man)
 ‘ Daughters of Eve, will strike, or persecute.’
 ‘ To those around he cried,—‘On this whole fleet,—
 ‘ Save such as bear the mothers, and their food, 455
 ‘ Waste ! Spare not ! Devastate !’—He scarce had said,
 When flaming brands advance—from bark to bark,
 ’Till one wide blaze illumines earth and heaven !

Whilst the destroying columns raised on high
 Their forked splendors, Alfred view’d the scene, 460
 Calm and unmoved—planning the future deed ;
 Whilst all the host of Saxons sported round ;
 Exulting in their frantic merriment.
 So on some calm and wintry eve, appears
 The boreal meteor, through whose dancing light 465
 Arcturus shines, tranquil and dignified,
 Urging his destin’d course.

As in the west
 The glorious sun appeared, the blaze of earth
 Still mingled with the crimson glow of heaven : 470
 When Alfred cried, ‘ Brave and intrepid men !
 ‘ Had Danes opposed, then had your courage shone ;
 ‘ Now is the honor less, the use the same :

'Thanks fervent to the unseen hand of heaven !
 'Now will we march to Selwood, and embrace 475
 'Our waiting brethren ; then are we prepared
 'To meet the Danish chieftains and decide
 'Oddune's suspended fate.' Instant they cried,
 'To Selwood ! Live our prince !' when Sigbert stood,
 Sudden, before the king !— 480

Dark was his eye,
 While not a word he spake. The king exclaim'd,
 'Where now the Danes ?' Nor yet a word he spake,
 But, look'd to earth, abash'd, when Alfred thus :
 'Thy sword is bloody ! I conjure thee, say 485
 'Whence came it ?' He replied, 'O king,
 'I fear to tell thee ;—I have slain the foe.'
 'Slain him ! cried Alfred, 'How,' and whence the deed ?
 'Did I not warn thee with a monarch's voice
 'To spare him, and conduct him to our sight ?' 490
 Sigbert thus answer'd. 'Lenient some may be,
 'I cannot spare a Dane. One hideous form,
 'And one alone, of the two flying foes,
 'These eyes beheld. O'ertaking him, I cried,
 'Dane ! death is near. We fought ; I vanquish'd him ; 495
 'And who the Ordeal¹²⁴ fears, feels not as I !'
 'When vanquish'd,' Alfred said, 'why brought'st thou not
 'Thy one foe hither ?' Sigbert answer made.

'It must be told !—then, know, O king ! the Dane
 'Pleaded for life, and earnest, but mine ear 500
 'Scorn'd his petition. Him I thus address'd :
 'If angels from their silver clouds look'd down,
 'And shouted, 'Spare him !' with a voice of thunder,
 'I would disdain them all, for ere thou breath'st
 'A second time, thy venom'd blood shall flow ! 505
 'So saying, I the prostrate demon slew.'

'What !' Alfred said. 'Didst thou disdain a foe

' Asking for mercy ?' Sigbert thus ; ' I did,
 ' For thinking of my many wrongs, I cried,
 ' When tigers spare their prey, then, nor till then, 510
 ' I will spare *thee*, and instant through his heart
 ' Plunged this my sword.' With slow and solemn tone
 Alfred replied, ' Thou art no friend of mine !
 ' I now disclaim thee ! Never from this hour
 ' Approach thy king, but let the murderer's scorn 515
 ' Light on thee, and reward this evil deed !'

Sigbert look'd earth-ward, with the visage dark
 Accused by conscience, deadliest of all foes !—
 Then turn'd, and, sad at heart, roam'd far away.
 When Alfred, joyous, thus address'd his bands ; 520
 Loud exultation round.—' Rejoice, brave men !
 ' This night hath saved the state ! Return we now.
 ' To Selwood. On the morrow we may say
 ' Where duty next shall call us.'—

The wide shore 525

Rang with their loud acclaim—re-echoed far ;
 And all triumphant to the forest march'd.

A L F R E D :

BOOK XI.

ARGUMENT.

Oddune escapes from Kenwith Castle, and arrives at Selwood Forest.

Now had the Saxons reach'd, 'mid Selwood's wilds,
Safely their fort. Whilst journeying on their way,
Absorbed in thought, the tread of multitudes
Distinct was heard. And often by the skirt
Of some deep wood, or in the valley, sounds 5
From the wild echo came, that to their minds
Convey'd a transient freedom from the cares
Still prone to rise;—like what the mariner,
Shipwreck'd, may feel, when, 'scaping in his boat
On the wide sea, he casts a ravish'd eye 10
At the warm glow of heaven—the setting sun.

Ere the grey dawn appear'd, the king arose,
And wander'd 'mid the prostrate host, whose shields
Upon the ground, lay scatter'd, deep impress'd
With honorable scars. The sun now rose, 15
Glowing refulgent; whilst the dewdrops bright,
Spread o'er the neighbouring trees, or couchant thorn,
Look'd like celestial spirits, to the eye
Of sportive fancy, that around encamp'd

To guard the sleeping Saxons.—Alfred spake, 20
 When all upleaping, round him throng, to learn
 Their future destiny. Thus he began :

‘ Exult, brave men ! the God whom you have serv’d
 ‘ And in whose strength confided, hath appear’d
 ‘ For you and me. I would not buoy your hearts 25
 ‘ With hopes ideal, for I now declare,
 ‘ Full and distinct, to every man around,
 ‘ Our prospect still is hid in mists and clouds,
 ‘ Thick and portentous. Tho’ success hath crown’d
 ‘ Our late endeavour, yet we know full well 30
 ‘ The malice, the exterminating rage
 ‘ Of these our enemies. Their fleet destroy’d,
 ‘ Will but inspire their minds with deeper wrath
 ‘ And more determin’d vengeance ; for, our eyes
 ‘ Soon will behold them, not, as heretofore, 35
 ‘ Vindictive only, but, with wolfish hearts,
 ‘ Fill’d with o’erwhelming rage, and black revenge.—
 ‘ Subjects beloved ! when of success I spake,
 ‘ It was the final issue ; for the race
 ‘ Of future Saxons. *We* shall till the soil, 40
 ‘ But *they* will reap ! I must declare my thoughts !
 ‘ Mine is the full propulsion of the heart,
 ‘ Not to be check’d. Cut off from aid, the Danes
 ‘ Before our growing might, at length must fall ;
 ‘ But, fatal is the process. I may die ! 45
 ‘ Nay, many round me list’ning, too, may die !
 ‘ But, Oh ! for what ? Reserve your latest breath,
 ‘ If in the fight you fall, to ask, for what ?—
 ‘ Your country’s cause !—and with that thought expire.—

‘ Oh ye, in after times, who know the worth 50
 ‘ Of peace and liberty, who underneath
 ‘ Your quiet tents, survey the scene around,
 ‘ Smiling upon your offspring, whilst no dread

- ' Of fierce barbarians haunt your midnight couch ;
 ' And when you wander thro' the thicket's shade, 55
 ' Withhold the solitary path, lest there
 ' Some vengeful Dane should crouch, oh ! think of us,
 ' Of what we bore, to purchase for our sons
 ' The boon their fathers knew not !—In us dwells
 ' A gen'rous anxiousness, a kindling hope, 60
 ' To live for after times. Not to exhaust
 ' The sum of usefulness,—upon one age ;
 ' But rather, with solicitude divine,
 ' To scatter seed, which shall luxuriate
 ' And upward spring, when he who sow'd has long 65
 ' Slept with his fathers. This be my desire !
 ' Subjects ! endure the language of my heart.
 ' As heaven alone foresees—who soon may die ;
 ' If war should lay me low, you who survive,
 ' Forget not to declare, I valued life 70
 ' But for my subjects' good. My little reign
 ' Hath not disclosed my character. I feel
 ' Such yearnings to be call'd—the faithful friend,—
 ' The father of my people ; I have pored
 ' With such full fervency, upon the good 75
 ' Of you, O Saxons ;—I have cherish'd long
 ' Such scenes ideal, when, upon my throne,—
 ' So nobly fought for, and so hardly won,
 ' I might uncurb'd consult your benefit,
 ' And practise all I ponder'd, that, in truth, 80
 ' The thought of sudden and untimely death
 ' Doth half a coward make me. Did I say—
 ' Coward ? Oh ! no. There is no trembling here.
 ' I only dread, lest, in hereafter times,
 ' This heart, now warm, should swerve from its resolves, 85
 ' And, lost to honour, Alfred's name appear,
 ' In the long list of lofty potentates,—
 ' Of whom the record stands,—' They lived, and died !'—
 ' If He who searches man's profoundest thoughts,

' And knows the frailty of our best resolves— 90
 ' Poor human nature !—should in me behold
 ' Th' inconstant spirit,—I desire not life !
 ' I only pray that God would raise some up,
 ' Of purer thought, and sterner fortitude,
 ' To meet this evil day !' 95

Each Saxon round

At these last words, was sad. Tho' grieving, none
 Spake of his grief. Words had no power to tell
 The deep interior sorrows of the heart.—
 Alfred again. ' It soothes my troubled mind 100
 ' Thus to have said. We now must Oddune seek,
 ' That man magnanimous, who haply now
 ' His last meal contemplates. Famine severe
 ' We must avert. Soon shall that chief behold
 ' Our waving banner, and if heaven permit, 105
 ' Find at our hand deliv'rance.'

All, aloud,

Shouted, ' to Kenwith !' Scarce had the sound ceased,
 When in the air an answering shout was heard !
 Thoughtful the Saxons look'd, when to their joy, 110
 Oddune the brave drew nigh !—the gallant man,
 For whom their swords were drawn, their hearts arous'd.
 He flew to Alfred, kneeling on the earth
 He clasp'd his hand. The king, amazed, exclaim'd,
 ' Oddune ! and is it thou ? My doubtful sight, 115
 ' I cannot trust it ! let me hear thy voice !'
 Said Oddune, looking up, ' Oh best of kings !
 ' It is thy faithful servant.' Alfred spake,
 ' How cam'st thou here ? Declare !' The chief replied
 ' From the besiegers' sword, by night we fled, 120
 ' Urged on by famine. Now are we prepared
 ' To follow thee, oh king ! and prove again
 ' Our courage and devotion.' Alfred thus,
 ' Oddune speak on ! Too deep an interest mine,
 ' Not to require from thee each circumstance, 125

‘Since last we parted.’ Thus the chief began.

‘When in the woody glen, and by the side
 ‘Of that clear brook I left thee, I, alone,
 ‘Pass’d on disconsolate, and felt poor hopes
 ‘That better days would ever meet us more. 130
 ‘Whilst thus I sped, it was a moving sight
 ‘To see the earth untill’d, the orchard plat
 ‘O’ergrown with weeds, and ever by my path,
 ‘What once had been a dwelling, desolate,
 ‘The walls all black with smoke. How beat my heart, 135
 ‘When as I pass’d some cottage, roofless, burnt,
 ‘I saw the little garden, still adorn’d
 ‘With many an humble plant, and bedded round,
 ‘With the wild thyme, tho’ half o’ergrown with weeds,
 ‘That, springing up, declared no master near 140
 ‘To check them, or relieve the scatter’d flowers
 ‘That from beneath peep’d out. Full vain to tell
 ‘The havoc of these Normans, all around
 ‘I mark’d their fatal tracks!—wide wasting fire,
 ‘And desolation wider!—As the west, 145
 ‘With heavy heart I reach’d, throughout the land
 ‘Tidings I sent for all of Saxon blood,
 ‘Instant, to join my standard. Soon I saw
 ‘Full many a loyal and intrepid youth
 ‘Throng eager round me, and again I thought 150
 ‘Success might crown our cause. Before the morn
 ‘We rose to practise arms. A braver band
 ‘No chieftain’s heart might cheer. Still we went on
 ‘Collecting, and each day beheld our ranks
 ‘Grow with our confidence. But now the news 155
 ‘Reach’d us, that Hubba from the Cambrian shore¹²⁵
 ‘Pass’d over with a host of mighty men;—
 ‘Refresh’d, with appetite for fire and blood!
 ‘I then revolved what best might serve our cause,
 ‘And call’d for counsel. To resist were vain. 160

- ' There was a certain castle, Kenwith, near :
 ' To that we fled ; when as we reach'd the gates,
 ' Upon a hill, adjacent, we beheld
 ' Hubba the Danish chief.
- ' The castle walls 165
- ' Scarce had we reach'd, when up the enemy
 ' Came shouting, and a fierce and haughty Dane
 ' Bore me this summons.' ' Instant spread thy gates,
 ' Or, by immortal Thor ! before the morn,
 ' Death shall o'erwhelm thee.' Thus I answer gave. 170
 ' Insatiate Waster from the north, thy threats
 ' Oddune disdains ! Tell Hubba, ours a king,
 ' Matchless for worth and valour, such as Danes,
 ' Ere long shall learn to estimate. Away !
 ' We have not learn'd to fear.' ' The man retired 175
 ' Now night was drawing near, when thus I cried,
 ' Saxons attend. Through all the castle search,
 ' And name what food ; for we are now cut off
 ' From present succour. Instant search was made,
 ' And soon I learn'd that there was left in store 180
 ' Slender provision only. Loud I cried,
 ' We will transmute that little into much.'
 ' Now we resolved, with consultation due,
 ' To send some man to tell thee of our state ;—
 ' Some cautious man, and resolute withal. 185
 ' One of tried confidence I call'd—he came—
 ' I thus address'd him. Find thou out our king !
 ' Seek him alike thro' town and hamlet small !
 ' Ask of the lonely travell'r, for behold,
 ' On thee, and on thy mission hang our lives.' 190

The king replied, ' I saw him not. What course
 ' Took the said man ?' Oddune replied, ' Forbear :
 ' Soon shalt thou know. The night now waned away
 ' In earnest consultation, and we weigh'd
 ' What best might serve. When from the watch-tower top 195

' We spied the sun uprising, bursting forth
 ' In all his splendors ; with that goodly sight
 ' We saw the Danes, nearing our castle walls.
 ' I need not tell, to thee, what thoughts were ours
 ' At that dread moment, when, before us, Danes 200
 ' Raved for our blood.—All was full confidence !
 ' The men who round me throng'd were resolute,
 ' Patriots, who loved their king, their country prized,
 ' Now panting, as of yore, to meet the foe.
 ' From the high battlements we could behold 205
 ' The work of death preparing, and the hour
 ' Approaching fast when every Saxon man
 ' Must prove his sword and heart. For many a day
 ' This sight we saw. And now the foe advanced,
 ' Prepared for storm and slaughter.—Near our walls, 210
 ' There stood a mighty host, who with such shouts
 ' Fill'd the surrounding air, that, for awhile,
 ' We only heard, one sense predominant.
 ' And now they raised their ladders, and began
 ' To mount the walls ! I need not tell, O, King ! 215
 ' How we received them. Never saw I yet
 ' The Saxon's sword so busy, or their shields
 ' Staying so many darts. We stood like men.
 ' Upon that morn, tho' not unmindful, I,
 ' Fought with less ardour, to myself it seem'd, 220
 ' Than each man who around thee listens, still,
 ' So dreadful was their valour.'—

At his words

The shout prevail'd, and when again the chief
 Prepared to speak, the sounds more lofty grew, 225
 Holding his words at bay. Like some tall tree,
 Pride of the mountain, when the tempest bends
 Its quivering head, and as it aims once more
 To cast its foliage back, and gaze at heaven,
 More furious feels the blast. When Alfred cried, 230
 ' The coward never owns his cowardice.

'Oddune, I know thee well. Speak on.' He spake.
 'Hard was the conflict, but at length we saw
 'The Danish sword rise heavily, whilst heaps
 'Writhing o'er heaps, beneath the ramparts lay ; 235
 'And all that yet ascended, came to know
 'What 'twas to die.'—

The contest now was o'er.

'Back to their camp, we view'd the Danes retire,
 'Discomfited, calling most vehement
 'On gods, but not the living God! Our hearts 240
 'Felt as they ought to feel. From the first day,
 'Silent, there stood upon our loftiest tower
 'One anxious to behold if friendly force
 'Drew nigh to succour; for we yet had hopes,
 'Fond, but unwise, and not to be essay'd 245
 'By reason, that thou yet would'st show thyself
 'From unlook'd quarter; so the patient man,
 'Gazed, and for ever gazed.—Now anxious thoughts
 'Came on us, for the messenger whose way
 'Dangers beset: whilst each man felt, yet feared 250
 'To tell his feelings. When the night drew near,
 'As planning in our hall, to our surprise,
 'Before us stood a man, Ceolric named,
 'By thee, with a paternal earnestness.
 'Sent to declare of succour. When we knew 255
 'Thy welfare, and that soon the Saxon sword
 'Would fly to aid us, rapture were a word
 'Too weak to speak our joy. The herald told
 'Of words which he had heard, when 'neath the walls
 'Trembling he crouch'd. We thank'd him, and again 260
 'Bade him seek thee.'—

Now fast our food declined.

'While musing sad at heart, sudden I felt
 'An animating power arise. I cried,
 'What once I heard thee utter, 'Spirits brave 265
 'Shine most in peril. When the thunders sound,

' And little minds exclaim, One moment more
 ' And death will visit us, the brave stand firm,
 ' And, tho' alive to danger, dictate calm
 ' What best may serve them.' Such let us be found ! 270
 ' Alfred this sword presented me, and said,
 ' I need not name thy duty,' and in truth
 ' He needed not, I knew it. Hear me, friends !
 ' Provision scanty only now remains..
 ' Two paths present themselves. Within these walls, 275
 ' T'encounter famine, or, made desperate,
 ' Pass through yon gates at midnight, and, if doom'd
 ' To meet our foes, fight manfully, urged on
 ' By all that fear forebodes, or hope inspires.
 ' Each answer'd, ' Let us dare the sudden flight.' 280
 ' This was our resolution.'—

' When eve came,

' From the high battlements we saw the sun
 ' Go down, resplendent, and anon, no ray
 ' Shone through the sky. Now, where the Danish camp 285
 ' Spread wide, we mark'd th'ascending fires, and thought
 ' Of victims immolated to their gods ;
 ' Such was the light in heaven. We told our host,
 ' Twelve hundred men, and, having left in view
 ' The Saxon standard, through the gate we pass'd !— 290
 ' 'Twas darkness all. The hollow wind flew by,
 ' And each could hear it rise, and die away—
 ' So perfect was the silence.

' From the gate

' We sudden turn'd, to keep the fatal spot 295
 ' Most distant, where, with fires and shouts, the Danes
 ' Held their mad orgies. Onward then we march'd,
 ' Still as the night, unceasing. One long day,
 ' Rapid we urg'd our course, and, on the next,
 ' We met a chilling sight !—A sight which some 300
 ' Little might heed, yet such as thou wilt hear,
 ' O king, with sorrow : we beheld the man,

' Whom, on a former day, we sent to thee
 ' To tell our state, stretch'd mangled on the earth !
 ' We knew the arm that smote him. Pardon me. 305
 ' If I recount his worth, for he was one—
 ' Too good to be pass'd by—

' I knew him well.

' Beside my castle stood his cot, the seat
 ' Of many comforts, and, tho' poor and low, 310
 ' He loved it and was cheerful. When the storm,
 ' The accustom'd chase¹²⁶ forbade, I loved to stray
 ' To this low cottage, where I learn'd that man
 ' Required not wealth to taste of happiness.
 ' The mother at her spinning wheel¹²⁷ was there, 315
 ' And round, her elder children, who, like her,
 ' Earn'd well their bread. And ever as the eve,
 ' With lengthening shadows, slowly gather'd round,
 ' The sire, returning from his distant toil,
 ' Beheld his child, that, to the old oak-tree, 320
 ' Totter'd to meet his father ; who, with joy,
 ' Parents best know, quicken'd his tardy step
 ' At sight of him, and with the outstretched arm,
 ' Caught up his rosy boy, embracing him,
 ' And bore him to his lowly dwelling near ; 325
 ' Where, as he entered, the fond smile arose,
 ' Spontaneous on each brow. Then would he taste
 ' The frugal meal, or, holding on each knee
 ' A prattling infant, toy awhile, or tell,
 ' Some direful tale, haply of Beli's sons, 330
 ' Or Ludd's calamities,¹²⁸ that made their eyes,
 ' (Ready alike to weep or smile,) look up
 ' In childhood's vacant wonderment. When late,
 ' I, at thy bidding, reach'd the west, to rouse
 ' Courage in all who loved the Saxon weal, 335
 ' I sought him first. 'Twas as the eve advanced ;
 ' I saw him with his family, but not

' Cheerful, as heretofore ; a sullen gloom
 ' Lower'd o'er his brow, for many a man went by,
 305 ' And told of thy disasters, and the Danes. 340
 ' Palsied with hopeless dread, full many a day
 ' He had not left his cot, for when he saw
 ' His helpless children, and a wife so dear,
 ' He grasp'd his father's sword, and with his son,
 ' Worthy of such a sire, a noble youth, 345
 310 ' Stood, fearless, to resist what foe or foes
 ' Might dare invade them. When he view'd me near,
 ' (I yet behold him,) rushing out, he cried,
 ' My master ! Is it thou ? And art thou yet
 ' Spared in this dying hour ?' I answer'd not, 350
 315 ' For creeping round my knees his children came
 ' Welcome to bear ; whilst from his mother's breast
 ' One toward me bent ; I saw his infant smiles,
 ' And half forgot my sorrows. But enough !
 ' OSWALD I thus address'd. Shout, gallant man ! 355
 20 ' To raise the country hither am I come,
 ' Sent by our monarch. We must one and all
 ' Make the last effort. Looking firm, he said,
 ' Here are my wife and children ! need I say,
 ' How dear they are ? thou know'st it ! yet e'en these, 360
 5 ' I can forsake to aid the best of kings,
 ' And serve my country ! Speak, and I obey,'

' Never will come the hour that I shall lose
 ' The touching and heart-harrowing spectacle,
 ' When from his door he pass'd. The mother came, 365
 ' Who silent stood before, and, weeping, cried,
 ' Husband, may God preserve thee !' Saying this,
 ' Back she retired. The children now drew near,
 ' And one, a blooming girl address'd me thus ;
 ' From harm preserve my father ! Noble chief ! 370
 ' We have no other friend.' ' She thought my power,
 ' Next to omnipotent. Ill-fated maid !

- ' If living, thou hast sorrow yet in store.
 ' We left the cottage. Never braver man
 ' Join'd in thy service. Through the country round, 375
 ' He journey'd, calling Wessex' sons to arms ;
 ' And soon a valiant host, to serve their king,
 ' Came crowding near. I told thee how we fled
 ' To Kenwith, and in that important hour,
 ' Requiring some stout heart, I thought of him, 380
 ' And sent him as a wary man, yet bold,
 ' To bear our state to thee ; and here alas !
 ' Lay his sad corse ! Each gazer round exclaim'd,
 ' Poor Oswald !' Ours were true and unbought tears.
 ' We gave him sepulture ! 385
 ' But I must say
 ' Something of Oswald's son, *Montalto* named.
 ' Bold, gen'rous, and preeminent for worth :
 ' Frank, lion-hearted :—rich in mental store ;
 ' Wealth not derived from others, but himself ; 390
 ' From the rich stores of a reflective mind :
 ' By nature taught. When he beheld his sire
 ' Eager for war, ' I by my father's side,'
 ' Loud he exclaim'd, ' will meet the wasting Dane,
 ' And fight for Alfred—while one drop of blood 395
 ' Flows in these veins.'—The mother hasten'd near,
 ' And gazing at me, with a tearful eye,
 ' Said plaintively, ' Chieftain, my heart will break !
 ' Spare me my son ! Take not *Montalto* hence !
 ' Let one suffice ! These little ones around 400
 ' He must protect !'—I saw the weeping tribe !
 ' Wilt thou withhold, thy censure ? At that sight
 ' My heart relented !—' Stay !' I to him spake.—
 ' Be thou a father, till thy sire's return !'
 ' On every visage, joy, a gleam o'erspread ! 405
 ' Not so *Montalto*.—With the settled brow,
 ' One knee on earth, the youth thus answer'd me.'
 ' O, chieftain, hear my prayer !—Restrain me not !

'Thy will I prize, but I, whate'er thou say'st,
 'At such a time when foes devour our land, 410
 'Must serve my king and country!—If I haste,
 '(Nor long delay) to join the battle-plain,
 'Deem not my reverence less, O; chief, for thee!
 'Now must I sorrowing,—leave the little ones,—
 'The mother, best of mothers! whom I love— 415
 'Heaven knows how dearly! yet the whole I leave,
 'To that good Providence which governs all!
 'Which said, he hasten'd to his cottage door.
 'Such is the stable texture of his mind,
 'That he, erelong, I judge, will join our ranks,— 420
 'No Saxon more courageous. With thy grace,
 'Him will I raise above th' unletter'd hind.'
 'Aye!' Alfred cried, 'Distinguish his desert.
 'Such men are rare, and we must honour them.
 'Merit with me shall never want a friend.' 425
 When Oddune once again his speech pursued.

'But now I tell thee of my progress here.
 'I knew that Selwood was our king's resort,
 'And having reach'd its confines, we, awhile,
 'Paused in uncertainty, when looking round 430
 'We saw a lonely damsel, with her load
 'Of fruits and cates, of whom we ask'd for thee.
 'Timid, she answer'd, 'To the king's resort
 'I now am bound.' Conducted by the maid,
 'We reach'd this castle, and with unfeign'd joy 435
 'Once more behold our monarch.'

Alfred cried.

'Subjects! thrice welcome after toils like yours!
 'When, turning to his valiant friend, he spake.
 'Good Oddune this most piteous tale of thine,— 440
 'Of Oswald, that true-hearted cottager,
 'Afflicts me, and so hangs upon my mind,
 'That I could half have wish'd I had not heard—

'What do I say? should ever king reject
 'Misfortune's touching voice?—a moment shun 445
 'Sorrows his subjects bear, and, not to hear,
 'Fancy they are not felt?—This luxury—
 'I know it not! my ear shall hear them all.—
 'This heart commiserate; and if I live—
 'To the extreme of possibility, 450
 'This hand relieve. Such are the duties stern,
 'I recognise. Kings should exist alone
 'To bless their subjects.—All that thou hast said
 'Mem'ry will hold with solemn faithfulness,
 'And if the hour of peace should ere arrive, 455
 'I may convince that wretched family,
 'That they have yet a friend.'

Oddune once more.

'If not obtrusive, I, one other word
 'Would speak of young *Montalto*, for, in truth 460
 'He is no fleeting character; a son
 'With mind and heart of all rare qualities.
 'Some call him BARD, but he himself denies
 'Title so high. A shepherd youth is he,
 'Fond of his simple lute, on which he plays, 465
 'His flock beside, while oft the villagers
 'Crowd round to listen, and in festive hour
 'Join in the evening dance. But I must cease.
 'These are unsuited words for royal ears.'—
 'Nay,' Alfred cried, 'speak on. Some moments few 460
 'The busiest may devote to recreate;
 'And after these thy words, the change of thought
 'May best prepare us for more cogent things.'

Bending, thus Oddune spake. 'This shepherd youth
 'Montalto, with his crook, and rustic pipe 465
 'Roam'd o'er the hills, and made the vallies ring
 'With his sweet melody. A youth so prized,
 'Courteous, and kind at heart, and good withal—

- ' Above the common standard, gain'd the smiles,
 ' (O, loveliest moment of life's holyday !— 470
 ' To which the *elder* turn, unconsciously,
 ' With ever new delight, and fondly say,
 ' Once, I was happy ! That sweet Calenture,—
 ' When love first beam'd upon his youthful heart—
 ' That verdant spot ! where memory lingers still, 475
 ' Loath leaving it !) *Montalto* gain'd the smiles,
 ' Reciprocal, of one a shepherd maid,
 ' Lovely as chaste, while all the country round
 ' Heaped praises on MATILDA, and her swain.
 ' To tempt her to the early walk, when dews 480
 ' Hung on the thorn,—creation smiling round,
 ' This LOVER'S SONG he late addressed to her.

Come MATILDA, blooming Fair,
 Hear thine own MONTALTO call ;
 With the lark will we repair
 To the loud, rough waterfall.

Who can view the woodbine wreathe,
 Lovely guardian, round the bower ;
 Who the early perfume breathe,
 And not hail the balmy hour.

Now, wandering thro' the meadow wide,
 With the wood-note warbling loud ;
 Now by the the clear meandering tide,
 Gliding, like a monarch proud.

Who can view the yellow corn,
 To the reaper bending low ;
 Or the ruby cloud of Morn,
 Nor the grateful heart o'erflow.

What with nature may compare,
 To awake the lofty thought ;
 Nature, ever new and fair,
 Now to pomp of glory wrought !

Oh! what proof, what line on line,
 Teeming through our Earthly Ball;—
 With a plenitude divine,
 Of a Great—Eternal All!

Before the fervent noon-tide ray,
 Mark the air, with quiet deep;
 While yet the ruddy dawn delay,
 And with dew the flowret weep,

All alone will we retreat,
 Far from every prying eye;
 And beguile the moment fleet
 With delightful coloupy.

Come, improve the happy time,
 While we think, the whole may fade;
 In the morning hour of prime,
 Come, MATILDA, blooming Maid!

Alfred thus spake; ‘ Good Oddune, at this hour,
 ‘ Thoughts of high import fill my mind, yet, know,
 ‘ Should heaven our efforts bless, and we, the Danes 485
 ‘ Hurl from our land, remembrance I will keep
 ‘ Of young *Montalto*, and his promised bride;—
 ‘ Claim’d by their own desert, and to award
 ‘ Some honor to poor *Oswald*!—Spirit his
 ‘ Refreshing to the burden’d memory— 490
 ‘ That turns from names inferior, to survey
 ‘ Our human nature, in its grandest form.
 ‘ Cramp’d by the power of circumstance, I now
 ‘ Can only heave the sigh, and wish, not act.

‘ Most noble king!’ Oddune obeisant cried, 495
 ‘ I have one other *Lay*, safely lock’d up
 ‘ In this my mem’ry of the shepherd youth’s—
 ‘ *Montalto*! would’st thou hear it at this hour?
 ‘ I prize it, tho’ the chaff preponderates.
 ‘ It has a secret meaning, to be sought 500

' Amid the rubbish that encumbers it.—
 ' Fit for the winter eve,—the christmas fire,
 ' When stories fly like sparks from Vulcan's forge;
 ' Fancy predominant. But thou shalt judge.'
 Alfred, with passing smile, this answer made. 505
 ' Oddune! thou'rt smitten by old Poesy.
 ' I like thee better for thy little weakness.
 ' I too am touch'd by the same malady.
 ' But this in happier times. Yet may I say—
 ' When evening closes round, few moments then 510
 ' I may bestow upon Montalto's Lay :
 ' Now sterner duties call us. War is near !
 ' We must prepare for battle! haste thou forth !
 ' I follow thee. Our all is now at stake !
 ' The Danes, to madness stung—soon will present 515
 ' The hostile front, calling our valour forth.'

Oddune obey'd; when thro' the Saxon hosts,
 Joyful he ranged, and found, with bounding heart,
 One hope predominant; for all aspired
 To meet the infuriate wasters of their land.— 520
 Now, at the midnight hour, when stillness reign'd,
 Oddune the king approach'd. Thus he began.
 ' This is Montalto's Lay.

In Albion's olden times was born,
 No matter where,—a lovely *Mary* :
 Her cheek was like the blush of morn,
 Lightsome and gay as Fawn or Fairy.
 But still, she was not free from ailing;
 She had one small, but common failing.

To *Wish*, and *Wish*, was her delight,—
 More changeful than the Shepherd's fold.
 The weather never suited quite,
 It was too hot,—or else too cold :
 And then,—some distant object pleased her,
 But what was present always teased her.

A *Wizard Sage*, with stately stride
 Once cross'd her path, and saw her sad.
 'What ails thee? Gentle Maid!' he cried,
 'I like the damsel blithe and glad,'
 Oh, Sir!' she said, 'I *wish* in vain,
 'And when I'm weary, *wish* again.

'I see the hoar-frost deck the sprays,
 'But *Winter* has no charms for me;
 'I love the long and joyous days
 'When nature smiles in ecstasy.'
 'Tis done!' the Wizard cried, when, lo!
 The heavens with Cancer's radiance glow.

Pleased with the change, the Sun she hails.
 But soon his scorching beams oppress'd her;
 'I like,' she cried, 'bleak *Winter's* gales,
 'His ice-bound streams, and rugged vesture;—
 'When parties,—meeting with delight,
 'Recount the freaks of Imp or Sprite.—

'When, 'mid the crackling hearth, all pale,
 'We hear the tempest rave without;
 'Repeating Ghost or Elfin tale,
 'Till all their nearest neighbours doubt,
 'And see, distinct, in earth or air,
 'Some Spirit glide, or Goblin glare.'

The Wizard heard, when, instant, round,
 Old Frost's teeth-chattering empire spread;—
 The leafless tree, the iron ground,
 With dark'ning clouds, portentous! dread!
 The snows now mantle vale and hill,
 And the wintry winds are loud and chill!

The maiden, shrinking, shivering, cried,—
 'I *wish* sweet *Summer's* balm were near!'
 The Wizard heard, and thus replied,—
 'Haste *Summer*!' when the prospect drear,—
 Vanish'd! and, at the potent sound,
 All forms luxuriant reign around!

When thus the Wizard.—‘From this hour,
 ‘*Summers* and *Winters*, thee obey!
 ‘Call either! Well improve thy power!’—
 Exulting in imperial sway,
 With views, like ocean, unconfined,
 All rapturous visions fill her mind.

She first on *Winter* calls, and then,
 The *Summer* pleas’d her taste the best;
 Then surly *Winter* comes again,
 And then the Hours, in garlands drest.
 Each follows each, as Fancy reasons,
 And thus successive pass the seasons.

Alas! in her tumultuous dream,
 She thought not of the *march of Years*;
 She heeds not Time’s retreating stream,
 That never in its *flood* appears!
 And now, on her once lovely face,
 The eye the stamp of *age* might trace!

It chanced that on a summer’s morn,
 She, musing, stray’d o’er neighbouring mountain;
 And as she sped thro’ brake and thorn,
 She look’d into a *glassy fountain*.
 She starts! she shrieks! the frantic cry
 Proclaims the sufferer’s agony!

In loneliness she breathes her pain;—
 ‘How shall my heart its anguish hide!
 ‘I never shall be young again
 The bud has droop’d, the flower has died!
 ‘*Wishes* have been my broken reed,
 ‘And my days have pass’d with lightning speed!’

While in the depths of sorrow drown’d
 (Where hope no transient gleam might borrow;)
 The Wizard *Mary* weeping found.
 When thus she faltering told her sorrow;—
 ‘For *wishes* I my life have sold!
 ‘I once was young, but now am old!

‘I scarce have breathed th’ inspiring air—
 ‘Before my mortal periods close :
 ‘The slow-declining years—prepare
 The weary spirit for repose ;
 ‘And reverend is the mouldering tree,
 ‘But youth and age are one to me.’

The Wizard thus.—‘I read thy fate !
 ‘In vain thou mourn’st thy days mispent !
 ‘Knowledge with thee hath come too late,—
 ‘So steep’d in *Thankless Discontent* !
 ‘Mourn on,—thy wasted hours and years,
 ‘And shed thine unavailing tears.’

Bereft, disconsolate, opprest !
 The mourner stands, with downcast head !
 Commotion revels in her breast,
 But utterance from her lips has fled.
 The *Tear*,—to magic power allied,
 Now *softens* him who came to *chide* !

‘Thou hast been first in Folly’s train,
 ‘But if, (he utter’d) at this time,
 ‘I raise my Wand, and once again
 ‘Restore thee to thy pristine prime ;
 ‘Wilt thou renounce thy *Wishing Chains* ?—
 ‘And deem that best which *Heaven* ordains ?’

She cried,—joy flashing from her eyes,
 ‘Let others grasp at phantoms vain,
 ‘*Wishes* ! your treacheries I despise !
 ‘I spurn my fetters with disdain !
 ‘Give me my youth, and I will strive
 ‘To keep Contentment’s spark alive.’

He touch’d her, when she stands arrayed
 All lovely as the roseate Spring !
 The graceful mien !—the blooming maid !
 (Brief honors ! ever on the wing !)
 When thus the Sage, impressive spake ;—
 ‘To nobler aspirations wake !

'With thee all excellence is youth,
 'Unmindful of thy nobler part!
 'Prize rather Wisdom, Virtue, Truth;
 'The graces of the mind and heart!
 'These shall survive, and lustre shed,
 'When beauty fades, and youth is fled!
 'The days of mortal man are few.—
 'There is a heritage in sight!
 'That object steadfast, keep in view,
 'And plume thy pinions for the flight!
 'Man's life is emblem'd by the grass!
 'Improve the moments as they pass!'

'A dream! A lullaby!' Alfred exclaim'd.
 'Yet hath it one redeeming quality.—
 'There *is* a prize,—a heritage before us!
 'Oddune! may'st thou, may I, and all we love,
 'That greatest of all interests keep in sight!
 'Heaven grant it!' Oddune cried. 'All else is chaff!'

He moves not. Other words seemed gathering fast—
 By hesitation checked. The King beholds
 Confusion in the Chieftain's countenance,
 When, smiling, he inquires,—'What hast thou more,
 'Good Oddune, at this hour to claim our thoughts?—
 'I wait to hear thee.'—Thus the Warrior spake.

'Will it intrusion prove, most noble King,
 'If I recount to thee one other *lay*
 'Of young *Montalto*.—'Tis a record dread,
 'Yet teeming with instruction,—of a youth,
 'With cheering prospects, blasted in one hour—
 'When wine had madden'd him. Now, wretch he is,
 'And wildly calls on her whom he has slain,—
 'Forgetful of the deed so horrible!
 'From whose example, the *intemperate crew*
 'Wisdom might learn, and shun, more earnestly
 'Th' *intoxicating bowl*, than scorpions dire,

'And deadliest poisons. If my prayer thou grant,
'In condescension, speak, I pray my lord.'

Half loath, yet courteous, thus the King replies.
'This once I hear thee, but, the interdict,
'Pass I on all beside. I wait thy speech.'

Oddune, obeisant, thus:—'The youth was named,—
'*Proud Ailward*' Near the castle where I dwell
Was his abode, and at this very hour
He stands a monument, where all may read
How terrible is passion, which resents
Remonstrance, tho' expressed in gentlest guise.
Montalto found him, wandering, wild, and wan,
And, pitying, strove to cheer him; pointed out
The sinner's refuge;—reason'd valiantly
Against despair, but his solicitudes
Proved fruitless. Reason from her bust was hurl'd!
To chronicle so sad a spectacle,
Our rustic bard, *Montalto*, pour'd the strain.

What youth is that, who on the tomb
Kneels, poring, in yon lonely place?—
His hands outspread, and with a gloom,
Stamp'd, like a seal, upon his face?

He nothing heeds the passer by,
Bent o'er the cold sepulchral stone:
The deep-sunk, listless, wandering eye
Declares an anguish, all his own

He shrinks not from the wintry snow,—
Unconscious he, in sorrow drown'd:
The rains descend! the tempests blow!
He hears not, heeds not, sight or sound.

Whence are those wailing griefs forlorn?—
Which all may hear, tho' none may share?
'O, misery that I was born,
'And made this crushing load to bear!

'My mother! when shall *Ailward* hear
 'Those tender tones that once were thine?
 'Where art thou gone? my mother dear!—
 'Ah!—never more must joy be mine!

'An unquench'd fire consumes my breath!
 'My crimes uprise in dread array!
 'The night to me is lingering death,
 'While torturing Demons on me prey!'

The quivering heart, the trembling knee—
 Proclaim the waves that o'er him roll!
 What can this deed of darkness be,
 Which drinks the spirit, racks the soul!

Oh! it is deep, which we would fain
 Blot out!—as memory's darkest day!
 Oh! it is branded with a stain—
 Which Oceans might not wash away!—

Fill'd with th' *inebriate draught*, the child
 Unshrinking, acts th' assassin's part!
 He grasp'd the blade, in fury wild,
 And plung'd it to a *mother's heart*!

Excess no longer steels his breast!
 His eye is dim! His cheek is pale!
 Reflection comes with horrors driv'n,
 And o'er his spirit casts the veil!
 He roams a *Maniac*! See him there!
 No peace is his, in sun or shade!
 He wrings his hands, and in despair
 Weeps o'er the grave himself has made!

'A touching tale!' cried Alfred, 'and the more,
 'That *truth* is with it.'—Plaintive, thus the king,—
 (The tear descending)—'What unnumbered hosts
 'Of crimes and outrage on intemperance wait!
 'War slays his thousands, but a vaster crowd
 'Wine immolates!—men loving life,—who yet—
 'Speed with avidity the road to death!
 'Now, Oddness, fare thee well.'

The chieftain heard
 And bending left the presence of the King.

ALFRED:

BOOK XII.

SCENE—THE DANISH CAMP BEFORE KENWITH CASTLE.

ARGUMENT.

Hubba, the Dane, comes to Kenwith Castle; find the Saxons fled; Ivar arrives;
Death of Guthrum; intelligence brought of the destruction of the Fleet;
Quarrel of Hubba and Guthrum.

HUBBA, stand'g, gazing on Kenwith's walls,
'Now is the hour arrived! Soon shall yon flag
'That thus exalts its head, waving in scorn,
'With every man in that devoted pile
'On earth lie prostrate.' Turning to his troops, 5
Wrathful he cried, 'When on the battlements
'This sword you see triumphant, spreading round,
'Death and destruction, view your wrathful prince!
'Nor till you see *him* stay the work of death,
'Warriors, stay ye! for, by immortal Thor, 10
'I swear no Saxon shall survive this day.'
When Guthrum rais'd his voice, but, as he spake,
Hubba, impatient cried, 'Silence, O, man!
'No moment this for words! Prepare thy sword.
'We haste to triumph.' When, the banner, near, 15
Eager he seiz'd, and march'd toward Kenwith's towers.

As near the walls they come, each, confident,
 Look'd for the hostile sword, yet, none appears;
 And as beneath the beetling walls they stand,
 Viewing no Saxon, dim conjectures rose; 20
 When Guthrum thus: 'Beware the ambuscade!
 'This wily enemy prepares new plans
 'To thwart our vengeance.' Hubba cried, 'In vain!
 'These swords shall lay him low.'

They gain the height. 25

Yet, not a man appears! 'Behold your chief;'
 Cried Hubba, as he downward leap'd, enraged,
 Grasping his battle-axe. Nor yet a foe!
 O'er all the place he looks, when, with surprise,
 He views the gates unbarr'd, and inward rush 30
 Danes, unresisted. Then each warrior knew
 Oddune had fled! In wonder mute they stand,
 Stifling their wrath, when Hubba, near, espied
 An aged hound, blind, and for master lost
 Howling disconsolate. The chieftain rais'd 35
 A savage shout, and, as he saw the beast,
 Cried, 'Yet one foe,' and with his ponderous ax
 Shatter'd his brain. When wrathful he exclaim'd:

'Gods, and the Saxons gone! These spacious walls
 'Untenanted. The gates wide open, thus, 40
 'Laughing at all our toil, and nothing here
 'To wreak our vengeance on! The sacrifice,
 'On yester eve, hath play'd us as ye see
 'Strange work. But whither are they gone? What route?
 'Guthrum, the horsemen! Mark their steps! Proclaim 45
 'Instant pursuit, and when your swords o'ertake,
 'Kill all! Tho' Odin's self¹²⁹ before me stood
 'This sword would pierce him through to meet the last
 'Of flying Saxons.'—Like the morning mist,
 A sight appears, and yet the sun was up, 50
 The sky unclouded. Each, with earnestness,

Look'd toward the spot, when Hubba cried, 'Beware !
 ' A coming army ! By my horse's mane,¹³⁰
 ' Alfred himself !—Nay, warriors, shout aloud !
 ' Vict'ry is ours ! I hear the War-god's song ; 55
 ' Ivar my brother comes !—To aid our cause
 ' The raven flaps his wing !—Danes raise the shout !
 ' Now are our hopes fulfilled, and now our swords
 ' Sea, earth, and heaven may dare !' The brothers meet !
 The salutation o'er, Ivar began. 60
 ' Hubba, behold before thee gallant men,
 ' Famed in a hundred strifes, and now resolved
 ' To win new trophies. But to humbler things.
 ' Know, for brief season, till we whelm our foe
 ' In ruin irretrievable, and sweep— 65
 ' The Saxons from the land, I deemed it well,
 ' Down on the southern shore, to leave our barks,
 ' Our wives, our children. When the Saxon king,
 ' Alfred is vanquish'd, and his head laid low,
 ' These we will summon, with the victor's pride 70
 ' To join our feasts and revelry.—In truth
 ' This Britain is a spot surpass'd by none.
 ' O'er many a land, and islet of the main,
 ' These feet have stray'd, but never saw I yet,
 ' All things compared, so choice a residence. 75
 ' This island shall be ours ! by valour won !
 ' Here will we plant our standard ; here at last
 ' Conclude our wand'rings, and the Saxon tribes,
 ' That race abhorr'd ! send to augment our slain.
 ' Yes, noble Hubba, we will Britain make 80
 ' Our dear delight—our permanent abode ;
 ' The fruit of courage,—guerdon hardly won,
 ' And to confirm its worth, its name endear,
 ' We all, in our exuberance of joy,
 ' Will call it *Second Denmark*.' Now, what news, 85
 ' Freely declare, since last I left this isle.'

Hubba replied, pride beaming from his eye,
 'On every side the dastard Saxons flee!
 'This isle is ours! nor doth one foe remain
 'To brave our onset. Now the fight is o'er. 90
 'Thou comest here to revel on rich spoils,
 'Not to contend with enemies, whose force
 'Merits thy valour. I have done the deed!
 'The honour mine!'—Ivar transported cried,
 'Thanks to the gods we worship! Thanks to him, 95
 'First of the heavenly throng, who from his halls
 'Descends when dangers threaten, and amid
 'Our army stands. But let us know thy deeds!
 'What hast thou done? and where the Saxon king,
 'Alfred, that stubborn foe?' When Hubba thus: 100

'Our native mountains, or Finmarkian plains,
 'Never such valour witness'd, as this land.
 'The feats of former wars, a semblance faint
 'Of these my matchless deeds; I have gone forth 105
 'Throughout the isle, scattering around me death,
 'And made my heart so conversant with blood
 'And fatal resolution, that till now,
 'Perils and strife, I never rightly priz'd.
 'This lovely land is ours! The toil is o'er! 110
 'And when the spoil is gathered, we are free
 'To form new plans, and subjugate new climes.
 'Now is our father's death aveng'd! This land
 'Curs'd with his blood, shall long the day bewail
 'That saw him perish. Dost thou, Ivar! ask, 115
 'Where Alfred is? would I could say in death!
 'Where is the fox, when the sun shews himself?—
 'Did I not name our father's death avenged?
 'Ivar! not yet. I have a captive here,
 'Whom to behold, will make thy bounding heart 120
 'Labour with ecstasy. Ella is mine!—
 'The base Northumbrian king who slew our sire!'

Ivar exclaim'd. 'Ella! the Saxon king!
 'How came he thine? Lend me thy thunders, Thor!
 'Thy lightnings lend me! and inspire this heart 125
 'To find some curse, tenfold more horrible
 'Than man hath yet endured! Now, Hubba, name
 'Whence came the captive?' Hubba thus replied:

'Hear the glad tale! When to thy native shore
 'I saw thee sail, to rouse our countrymen 130
 'Against this isle; northward I sped, to seek
 'The man whom Danes most hate. Soon I beheld,
 'Ogbert; the fight began.¹³¹ Before our swords
 'He fell and all his host. Next Ella came,
 'Proud on his prancing steed, of victory sure, 135
 'And counting o'er his slaughter'd enemies;
 'Such was his confidence. I turn'd and cried,
 'Behold the murderer of your king! This day
 'We will perform a deed, of which the Scald,
 'Hereafter shall delight to sing, and tell 140
 'How Hubba, in his fury, met the man
 'Who slew his father; what he there perform'd,
 'Whilst vengeance flapt her wings; what spoil was won,
 'What banquets to the hungry wolves were given,
 'When, calling on our Odin and our Thor, 145
 'This fight began.—Long and severe the strife,
 'Till, by our arms o'erpower'd, the Saxons fled!
 'Death followed them! Our very swords were hot
 'With that day's slaughter! Ella was my prey!
 'With this strong arm I beat him to the ground! 150
 'I rais'd him up! This sword defended him—
 'To crown the day of triumph when we met!
 'Now thou art here, now shall our wrath be shewn.
 'Bring forth the captive Ella!'—

Ivar cried, 155
 'Thou worthy son of an exalted sire,
 'Thou art my brother! Now a flood of wrath

' We both will pour o'er Ella ; he shall feel
 ' The bitterness of death, yet cease to die
 ' Till we revenge have had—complete, and full. 160
 ' He shall be flay'd ! '

Now with his clanking chains,
 Downcast and pale, the wretched Ella comes !
 He sees before him death, whilst the fierce Danes
 Scoffing behold him. When the chieftain cried 165
 To those around, ' Seize the perfidious king !
 ' Tear off his garb ! '—Ella approach'd and said,
 ' Hast thou no mercy ? ' ' Mercy ! ' cried the chief,
 ' Where was thy mercy, when immured in earth,
 ' My father lay ? How was thy pity shewn, 170
 ' When, from thy dungeon, Regner sent his voice,
 ' In solemn tones, calling on us his sons
 ' To think of Ella, whilst upon his heart
 ' Fierce serpents preyed ? ' ¹³² He died, and so shalt thou !
 ' Seize him, and bind him to yon tree ! There carve 175
 ' Upon his naked back the eagle's form,
 ' Whilst we gaze on exulting.'—To the tree
 The wretched Ella now is bound ! With joy,
 Wielding their monstrous knives, two men advance,
 And from the neck, with an unshrinking hand, 180
 Downward, the long gash draw. They pause awhile ;
 Then, 'neath the shoulder, either side, extend
 The murderous weapon, and with straining hand,
 Rend the tough skin, till o'er each elbow, wide
 The flaps are spread, and to the gazing eye 185
 The red nerve quivers !—

Silent his fierce pain,
 Ella had long endured, when Ivar cried,
 ' Now let him die ! Hubba, thy lance prepare !
 ' Transfix his heart ! ' Hubba his lance uprais'd, 190
 And stepping forward, poised the weapon well,
 Then, hurl'd it furious ! Thro' the sufferer's heart
 It forced its way, and each of all around

Rais'd the loud shout as Ella groan'd and died.¹³³
 When Hubba thus : 'One task alone remains ; 195
 'Alfred, our greater foe, to seize and serve
 'Like yonder Ella, whilst the ravens round,
 'Snuffing their prey, sail slow, and croak for blood.'

While gazing o'er the scene, Hubba exclaim'd
 'What noise is that?—Yon man!—whence came he? Say, 200
 'Stranger! thy business!' When the man drew near,
 A mariner, and cried, 'The day is lost!
 'Ruin approaches fast! The fleet! the fleet!
 'What mean'st thou?' Ivar cried : 'Mortal declare!
 'Or death reward thee!' 'Stay thy hand,' the man 205
 Cries trembling, 'This my tale : The fleet is lost!
 'Burnt! Vanish'd! Not a plank where once it lay
 'Now may be seen!'

Not more amaz'd is he,
 Who meets his death-wound from some hidden cause, 210
 Than Ivar and the chiefs that round him throng'd.
 'Burnt! did'st thou say?' Th'indignant warrior cried;
 'Whence came the fire? The gods are on our part,
 'And where the Saxons? Name it not again!
 'Nay own thyself a liar, or this sword 215
 'Wars with thy life!'

The mariner replied,
 'Twas false! Now check thy wrath.' Ivar exclaim'd,
 'Tell me the truth! Play with the lion's paw,
 'But fear thy Prince!'—'If then declare I may,' 220
 Answer'd the mariner, 'By this good sword,
 'My words *were* true! The fleet indeed is burnt!
 'The very clouds of heaven, caught the fierce glow!
 'Methinks I see it yet.'

A sudden fear, 225
 A dark anticipation, indistinct,
 Now fill'd the Danes. Their very natures changed
 To momentary languor and so still'd

Their fiery wrath, that each appear'd to each,
 Spell-bound and half forgetful of himself.— 230
 So the fierce bears, that unmolested range
 The snowy arctic, whilst, amid the plains,
 Or mountains wild, they gave their hideous yells,
 Breaking the sleep of Nature, that half seems
 To rise from her eternal slumbers, white, 235
 With fearful expectations and strange dreams !
 Till, wand'ring through the ice, or forest dark,
 Sudden they meet the pit-fall, and, for once,
 Forget their brumal appetites, and crouch
 Peaceful beside some brother of the wood.¹³⁴ 240

Cried Ivar, whilst his labouring breath heaved hard,
 'Where are the women ? Are they massacred ?'
 'All ! all !' the man replied.—'Vengeance afresh !'
 Exclaim'd the chieftain. 'Seize your swords ! Prepare
 'For fiery wrath, and hate unquenchable !' 245
 Through all the Danish ranks one sound was heard—
 'Blood ! Blood !' whilst Hubba turn'd—foaming with ire
 And hurl'd at Ella's corse another lance.—
 Rous'd from the transient silence, Hubba cried,
 'Rejoice, oh, brother ! this is as the brave 250
 'Might truly wish ! What led our footsteps here ?
 'Not to defend a fleet, but, conquer crowns !
 'And we *will* conquer. *Will*, did I declare ?
 'Conquer'd we have ! Our vanquish'd enemies,
 'Flee ever, whilst their boasted king, grown wise, 255
 'Unfriended hides 'mid cave and precipice.'—
 Ivar replied, 'This news is ominous !
 'And what thou say'st of crowns and victories
 'Comes coldly to mine ear. Yet, we are Danes,
 'Who obstacles may meet, but cannot fear.' 260
 'I tell thee,' Hubba cried, 'This isle is ours,—
 'Conquer'd. No foe remains, and Alfred's self
 Quick ruin shall o'ertake ! I augur well

'This deed is his.'

Now to the tower they pass, 265
 When Hubba thus: 'Guthrum! what thoughts are thine?'
 The chieftain answer'd. 'Light as are the winds
 'I heed these tidings, yet, in human ways,
 'Strange accidents turn out, and wide the bounds
 'Of possibility. This wasted fleet 270
 'Might some time hence have serv'd our cause! Oh, no!
 'I wrong'd my better sense:—all aid is vain
 'But that which centres in ourselves—in Danes!
 'The blow falls heaviest which *despair* brings down!
 'Rash! false adviser! didst thou say *despair*? 275
 'What word is that? We know it not,' exclaim'd
 Hubba, enraged. 'Shall we whose mailed hearts
 'Fear never enter'd, for a moment name—
 'The thing *despair*?—

Guthrum indignant cried, 280
 'How speak'st thou, chief! I, Hubba! of despair
 'Talk, and indulge weak fears for thee and me!
 'Young prince, thou know'st me not! Did I thus feel,
 'When, with thy father Regner, I pursued
 'The fierce Biarmian! Never did I fear 285
 'Serpent or giant, or the evil hour
 'When cowards tremble. Know! I fear not *thee*!

'Thy sword!' cried Hubba. Now be death thy fate,
 'Or mine!' Him Guthrum answer'd not, but forth,
 Dared to the fight, and as they forward rush'd, 290
 Ivar exclaim'd, 'Spirits of hell, avaunt!
 'What means this strife? O, Danes, restrain your wrath!
 'I grieve for this your rashness! Where is now,
 'Hubba! thy wisdom? Guthrum! thy control?'
 Each warrior, still remain'd; their massy shields, 295
 Rais'd, and their swords suspended in the air;
 When Ivar thus spake on.—

'Guthrum, forbear!

'Check thy mad ire! Raise not, vindictive thus,
 'Thy arm for slaughter, when before thee stands 300
 'Denmark's proud prince! And Hubba, stay thy sword!
 'Think who endures thy wrath! Thy father's friend!
 'The guardian of our fortunes, and the man
 'Whom Regner thought of, at his death, and cried,
 'He shall avenge my fall!' Truly he spake, 305
 'He has avenged it! View him as he is,
 'Rash, yet endued with truth, and heaven's best gifts,
 'Fidelity and courage.'

'Guthrum's sword,
 Dropp'd, and he cried, 'The conflict now is o'er! 310
 'Hubba, thy hand! We know ourselves too well,
 'Courage to doubt, for thou art brave, and I,
 'I trust, not less so. Let us save our wrath—
 'The foe demands it!'—Hubba sheath'd his sword,
 And with a smile repress'd, that seemed to hide 315
 The lurking purpose, answer'd, 'True, thy words.
 'They do indeed demand it, but, to find,
 'There is the stratagem. They flee our shades,
 'And by their secret and night-brooding plans
 'Make all our threat'nings vain.' Hubba again, 320
 After a moment's pause.—

'This recent loss
 'We need not heed, but, that it seems to shew
 'Our foes, tho' weak, unconquer'd, and resolved
 'To work in darkness. Danes can never fear! 325
 'But, to my mind, tho' of success secure,
 'One deed seems needful! we must deprecate
 'Heaven's anger, and a *victim's* blood must flow.¹³⁵
 'Speak I not well, O, Ivar?' He replied.
 'Thou dost. Some blood must flow, of human kind; 330
 'Gods will receive none else, but whose, this hour
 'Need not determine. I would further speak.
 'Hubba, our brother,—ere the fight begin,
 'And Alfred fall before us, nine long days¹³⁶

'With sacrifice, must we invoke our Gods— 335
 'T' insure success ; then for the hour of wrath ! '
 When, turning, thus he spake. 'Guthrum, 'tis meet
 'To send some spies, to learn how now we stand,
 'And where our enemies, what force they have ;
 'That when the hours of merriment are o'er 340
 'Our swords may rise to vengeance.' Guthrum heard
 And forth withdrew.

The sounds his footsteps made.

Yet might be heard, when Hubba thus bespake.
 'Death on that Dane ! The birds of deepest hell ¹³⁷ 345
 'Gorge on his heart ! He rais'd his sword 'gainst mine !
 'Yes, Ivar ! thou did'st see the sight ! Thine eye
 'Witness'd thy brother's shame ! and Hubba lives,
 'Injured, yet unrevenged ! Why did my arm
 'Spare him ? Beneath my feet, why lay he not 350
 'Mantled in gore ?' Wrought up to maddening rage,
 And fierce as mountain torrent, he, again.
 'Ivar ! thou see'st my sword ; but if once more
 'This hand should shew it thee, and not o'erspread
 'With Guthrum's blood, then may I never meet 355
 'My murder'd father !—Having said, he rush'd
 Full toward the door, when Ivar, following, seized,
 And thus exclaim'd ;—'Withhold the fatal deed !
 'Stay thy rash hand ! Surrounded as thou art
 'By death and danger, would'st thou lift thy sword 360
 'Gainst Guthrum ?—that illustrious chief, whose name
 'Shines in our brightest annals ? Hubba, know !
 'This wrath of thine so blinds thee, that thou view'st
 'The colour and complexion of *his* mind
 'Whom Denmark honors, in mistaken hues ;— 365
 'As, mid the sunshine, sable birds look white.
 'Restrain thy raging spirit !'

'When I cease,

Cried Hubba, 'To forget this hour, inscribed
 'With wrongs indelible, all Vallhall, hear ! 370

' May I forget myself ! Thou saw'st his sword !
 ' And yet he lives ! Denmark's triumphant prince
 ' Stood and beheld a mortal raise his arm,
 ' Yet slew him not ! But brief the wrong. Away !
 ' Tempt not my wrath ! Withhold thy iron grasp 375
 ' And give me passage, or, before this sword,
 ' E'en *thou* shalt fall ! He dared my wrath ! Stand by !
 ' Parley anon !—' E'en now,' cried Ivar, ' stop !
 ' Thou shalt not pass ! but, hear me ! Stay thine ire,
 ' And listen, for before thee stands a pit, 380
 ' Thou little know'st how deep ! Are we not all
 ' Surrounded by the Saxons ? Would'st thou now—
 ' At such an hour, survey thyself alone,
 ' And not remember, that, on hostile soil
 ' We sojourn, whilst an enemy around 385
 ' Longs for our discord—waiting to devour
 ' Both thee and me ? Be wise and know thyself !
 ' And if thou must, with blood, wipe out this stain,
 ' Fancied, not real, stay till we have ground
 ' Alfred to dust ;—then, like our chiefs of old, 390
 ' The heroes of our song,—rage, fight, and die !'

' Thy words are wise,' cried Hubba. ' We will first
 ' The daring Alfred vanquish, then shall burst—
 ' The purpose that lies here. The grand account
 ' Shall be in after times. When Guthrum thinks 400
 ' All in oblivion, then will I exclaim
 ' War ! war ! eternal ! Yet may I display
 ' Something of that deep vengeance, even now,
 ' That swells my heart.—He hath a *Saxon Slave*—
 ' A female captive, fair as Gimer's child !—¹³⁸ 405
 ' Talk'd we not, Ivar ! of some sacrifice
 ' T' appease the Gods ?—But, Duty calls us hence !
 ' Hereafter, we will speak more confident.'

A L F R E D :

BOOK XIII.

ARGUMENT.

Alfred projects a visit to the Danish camp, in the character of a Harper—
His visit to a Woodman.

UPON his couch Alfred had stretch'd himself,
Sleepless, tho' seeking sleep ; by coming scenes
Fill'd with perplexity. Before the dawn
His castle he forsook, and roam'd alone
Through the deep wood, unseeing and unseen, 5
Save that amid the forest's thickest shades
He cast his eye, and, wondering, Sigbert saw ;
That lonely and most melancholy man !
Walking sedate, on whom the dews of heaven
Stood thick, and told his nightly wanderings far. 10

Still through the wood, the king in silence moved,
Contemplating himself, tho' near his home,
A stranger to its comforts, then again
Pondering on all the wrongs, deep and untold,
His subjects felt ; for whom, at opening morn, 15
And through the day, and at the hour of night,
He loved to cherish plans, so great, that minds,
Sordid and grovelling, might with one consent

Wrathful, have called them, phantasies and dreams,
 And, with convenient words and obstacles, 20
 Talk'd learnedly. Yet Alfred prized such thoughts,
 And from his earliest youth had sought t'enlarge
 The bounds of human intellect, and prove
 What joys the world might know, if those who ruled,
 Lived for their subjects. 25

Now, uncertainty,

Mists and thick clouds, upon the future hung !
 He fear'd the crimson dawn would never burst
 That brought the hour, when he might consummate
 All that his heart had cherish'd. 'Mid the strife, 30
 T' augment the tumult of his breast, again
 Alswitha's form, through his distracted mind,
 Rush'd, dress'd in terrors. 'Where is she,' he cried,
 'And what her wrongs, unfriended, far away !'

When, near his path, he saw a woodbine fair, 35
 Exhaling fragrancy, that, intertwined,
 Circled a deadly night-shade, then look'd down
 Upon the pois'nous plant on which it lean'd,
 Pure and immaculate. He stopp'd ! He gazed !
 Silent awhile, then cried, 'Thou beauteous flower ! 40
 'Thou art Alswitha, or an emblem true
 'Of her I love ; for as thou gently lean'st
 'Upon yon venom'd plant, and yet remain'st
 'Spotless and dignified, Alswitha thus
 'Upon the Danes shall rest, a little space, 45
 'Conscious of her high worth, and looking down
 'Untainted on her foes. This is indeed
 'Heaven's work to calm my mind.'

A mighty plan

Now struck the king, attended with dismays 50
 And dangers infinite, yet such as gave
 To him no terrors. Hastening to the fort,
 With earnest brow, thus to his chiefs he spake.—

' Friends ! who with me have borne all ills, endured
 ' Perils and strife, there is a vent'rous act, 55
 ' A bold achievement, which, to crown our toil,
 ' Some round me must perform. Regard your prince.
 ' Hubba and Ivar, with that other man,
 ' Guthrum, my most peculiar foe ! are now
 ' Gather'd near Kenwith, forming future plans 60
 ' To desolate our country. Well we know
 ' When stratagems and schemes are used, the like
 ' Should counteract them, and the antidote
 ' Be as the bane. I would advise this deed :
 ' Instant some Saxon to go forth and learn, 65
 ' Amid the thickest Danes, e'en in their camp,
 ' How stands the enemy ; their force how great ;
 ' Their next designs ; whether the wasted fleet
 ' Hath stay'd their anger, or their savage wrath
 ' Rous'd into fiercer vengeance. Service this, 70
 ' Which none may dare perform, save in some guise
 ' Familiar to the eye, of humbler sort.—
 ' What think ye ?'—

Each replied. ' Most wise ! the thought
 ' Well was conceived.'—Alfred thus answer made ; 75
 ' If one must go to meet the Danes, and learn,
 ' By many wiles, their state, clad in some guise
 ' That bars suspicion ; learning when they mean
 ' Next to assault us ; where their weakness lies ;
 ' With other knowledge, needful to be known, 80
 ' Yet only learnt among them, who around,
 ' So proper as your king ? '

Ere he had ceased,
 Each chieftain's countenance the impress bore
 Of joy's gay smile, for each had hoped *himself* 85
 That favour'd man ; but when they heard the words,
 ' So proper as your king ? ' they look'd abash'd,
 Confounded, as the man who travels long

O'er some parch'd desert, heartless, destitute,
 Sighing for shelter, when, 'mid harrowing fears, 90
 Far on his way, he spies the distant vale,
 Water'd and fill'd with plenty, but, when fast
 He speeds to meet it, finds to his sore cost,
 The fordless river, wide, and stretch'd between.—
 Each chief to Oddune look'd, waiting his words : 95
 Who thus began.

‘Thy pardon, prince ! I ask,
 ‘And if my earnest words to thee seem harsh,
 ‘Again I claim forgiveness, but, my heart,
 ‘Thou must not question. Monarch, stay the deed ! 100
 ‘Tear from thine eye the film that covers it,
 ‘And view the precipice, which to thee seems
 ‘Smooth and secure. At this most trying hour
 ‘It is a subject’s honor, to declare,
 ‘With firm, yet duteous words, one rash resolve, 105
 ‘One error, one false step, may sink us now
 ‘In ruin irretrievable, and bring
 ‘Destruction on us all !’—Alfred exclaim’d,
 ‘Good Oddune ! whence these unexpected fears ?’

The chief replied, ‘It is no common cause, 110
 ‘And when I think what thou hast done to save
 ‘Thy ravaged country, what thine head hath borne,
 ‘Thy heart endured, thy gallantry perform’d,
 ‘To screen from Denmark’s rage this hapless land,
 ‘And cheer thy fainting subjects ; when I cast 115
 ‘A backward glance, and think of days, when hope
 ‘Seem’d as it ne’er had been, whilst every arm
 ‘Hung nerveless, even these, and so had hung,
 ‘But for thy words, thy constancy ; then think,
 ‘Of this design, so pregnant with dismay 120
 ‘To thee and us, so hostile to the cause
 ‘Of Britain, tottering now ’tween life and death,
 ‘I should partake of something less or more

'Than human kind, if, hearing these thy words,
 'I did not start, and with my spirit strive 125
 'To stay thy desperate purpose.' Thus the king

'Oddune, thy zeal doth but convince me more
 'That thou art one whom men so earnest seek,
 'So seldom find—a friend ! that in thy heart
 'Thou lov'st thy country and would'st serve thy king : 130
 'But 'tis not honesty which always sees
 'The secret bounds, where rashness shews itself,
 'And courage ends ! What tho' thy heart be pure,
 'Thy wisdom undisputed, yet thou know'st,
 'Thyself too well, to think the heavenly light,— 135
 'Infallible, resides within thy breast.
 'Tho' to thy weigh'd and fix'd opinions
 'Deference be due, yet in this certain point
 'With thee I differ, for to me it seems
 'Conduct most wise to act as I have said.' 140

Like one who on the wide sea cast away,
 And in his little boat who long has toil'd,
 Till, weary, he reclines, then calls to mind
 The object of his toil, and strives again ;
 So Oddune felt, and to the king replied. 145

'I can declare of wisdom, as I ought,
 'It dwelleth not with me ; and I have found
 'This heart too fallible to trust its thoughts
 'With more than common confidence, yet hours,
 'And certain seasons sometimes will be found 150
 'When the full blaze of truth so strikes the soul,
 'And hides all doubt, that minds of modesty
 'Forget their characters, and half assume
 'The prophet's tone and dignity ; as such
 'Seem I to speak : for never did I feel 155
 'A more fix'd certainty in human ways,

'Than when I say ; If thou dost deck thyself
 'In art and stratagem ; if thou dost leave
 'This thy retreat, and wander far away,
 'Hoping to hide the countenance, that tells 160
 'Of unfeign'd majesty, dare venture near
 'That enemy, the Dane, and, fondly trust
 'Good will attend it, 'tis that trust I fear
 'That bodes destruction, for a certain voice,
 'Tells me that thence, thou never shalt return !"— 165
 Unmoved by opposition, thus the king.
 'Oddune, brave chief ! thou may'st as well conspire
 'To stay yon sun, or, to the man, call out,
 'Falling from some high precipice, 'return !'
 'And think that he will heed thee, as attempt 170
 'To stop my course!'

Oddune, low bending, cried,

'Once more, Oh, hear me ; once, I ask no more !
 'I know that thou wilt pardon me, Oh, king,
 'Nor doubt the motive which to these my words 175
 'Gives such new energy. To serve the cause
 'We fight for, and promote thy subjects' weal,
 'In this design, doubtless hath govern'd thee ;
 'This is most clear. But may not all the good
 'Thou hop'st to gain, some one, on easier terms 180
 'Secure for Britain ? May not one of us—
 'Nay, even I, go forth to calculate
 'On all I see and hear—bringing thee word
 'Most faithfully ? If wise to thee it seem
 'Thus to assume another's character, 185
 'And wander 'mid the enemy, unknown,
 'The bold adventure doth so suit my mind,
 'And mode of thought, that I would earnestly
 'This one fresh proof of confidence implore !
 'Spurn not my earnest prayer ! If in th' attempt 190
 'Oddune should fall, hundreds around their king
 'Would better serve him, but if thou should'st die !

‘ If Britain’s vengeful foe should lay thee low !
 ‘ There is an end of hope ! O, hear me, prince !
 ‘ I must not, cannot be denied !’ 195

Like one—

A blushing maid, who when she hears the name
 Dear to her heart, appears to hear it not,
 And rather than repeat her true-love’s name,
 Would wander far about. So Alfred seem’d, 200
 Till calling up his courage, thus he spake :
 ‘ Oddune, one motive I had vow’d to keep
 ‘ Concealed from every heart ; but these thy words
 ‘ So probe my spirit, and on what I say
 ‘ Such absence of all meaning cast, that I, 205
 ‘ To satisfy myself that I am one
 ‘ Who hath some meaning, must declare the truth.
 ‘ Is there not *one* amid the Danish camp,
 ‘ Think’st thou, most dear ?’ Instant in other light,
 Oddune the once mysterious subject saw. 210
 Alfred continued. ‘ I must seek the spot,
 ‘ Where *she* abides, and fain would I persuade
 ‘ This heart, that of the bold experiment
 ‘ Some good may follow, haply, rapturous thought !
 ‘ Alswitha I may rescue ; I may mark, 215
 ‘ Where to direct the terrors of our spear !’

Oddune, oppress’d with grief, beheld how vain
 The power of language to oppose the will
 Fix’d and determin’d, and objection more
 Forbore to urge. When thus he spake : ‘ What name, 220
 ‘ What character would’st thou assume, to keep,
 ‘ Far off, suspicion ? for, as well thou know’st,
 ‘ Should Danes suspect thee, tho’ their Mother Earth
 ‘ Sent from her deepest cave a warning voice
 ‘ To save thee from perdition, thou would’st die !’ 225

‘ This do I know,’ cried Alfred, ‘ but, in vain

- 'The thought assails me. I am bent, and now
 'Prudence must govern what it might not teach,
 'What character would I assume, dost ask?
 'The *Harper*! for my fingers well can sweep 230
 'Its bold, or gentlest strings.' The chief replied,
 'If thou indeed art fixed, no better name
 'May'st thou assume, for music has a charm
 'Melting all hearts. But then thy dress!—A thought
 'Darts through my mind. As yester-eve I roam'd 235
 'Far through this wood, near me I spied a hut,
 'Green as the leaves that shaded it, and half
 'Screen'd by the boughs. When first I saw its shape,
 'It seem'd to me that nothing *likelier* look'd
 'To simple cottage; and, as thus I thought, 240
 'My doubts were realized, whilst near at hand
 'There stood a man. I saw him, and would fain
 'Have enter'd on discourse.—Would'st thou desire
 'To hear my further tale?' Alfred replied—
 'Speak on.' When Oddune spake.
 The man I saw, 245
 'He was an aged woodman, apt to dwell,
 'Haply too much, on tales of other times,
 'Fond of his *brook*, his forest, and his home,
 'Yet, not obtrusive, whilst his words declar'd
 'The thoughtful rustic. Hoary were his locks, 250
 'And flowing, and the language of his eye
 'So mild, that it was plain his wants were few,
 'And that his spirit with the world had borne
 'Small intercourse. But what will please thee most,
 'I judg'd him wise enough—to look beyond 255
 'This scene of shadows, and to build his hopes
 'Like wisdom's sons,—on treasures in the skies—
 'Miss'd by so many Sages.—When he first
 'Glimps'd my approach, his fears were roused. He sped
 'Fast to his cot, and, to intimidate, 260
 'In valiant guise display'd the hostile front.

'Twill make thee smile, when I declare my tale.
 He stood against the door-post, and upraised,
 Weak in his trembling hand, a rusty sword,
 And seem'd to bid defiance; then I saw, 265
 Within the hut, a woman, like himself,
 Laden with years, and she too had a staff,
 Which from the ground she raised, as she would aid
 Her bolder husband. Instantly I stretch'd
 This hand to greet them: first the old man frown'd, 270
 Then, on the earth his doughty weapon cast,
 And forward came to give me the true grasp
 Of friendly welcome. There, to my surprise,
 Beside his chimney hearth I saw a *harp*;
 That which thou needest. If thou yet resolve 275
 To act the minstrel's part, we there will haste
 And the old man, haply, if grace thou find,
 Will lend thee this his *harp*.' The king replied,
 Good tidings these, which augur well I judge
 'Let us depart.' Now both together seek 280
 The distant woodman.

After patient toil,
 They reach the door and enter. O'er the fire,
 That gave its cheerful blaze, the aged pair
 Sat musing, and, 'mid many a lengthen'd pause, 285
 Made grave remark, often in idleness,
 To soothe or to beguile the lingering day,
 Perchance of season fair, of lowering sky,
 Spring backward, or the fruits of autumn drench'd
 By rains untimely. Thus the hours pass'd on, 290
 With simple converse, such as innocence
 And rest might furnish. On his board there lay
Pages of that *best book* vouchsafed to man;
 From their originals—transferred by *him*
 Now entering in disguise, the glimpse of which 295
 Yielded a zest munificent of joy,
 Above all price!

As now his glimmering eye
 The old man raised, to learn who touch'd his latch,
 He saw the chief, who on the former day 300
 Had enter'd, and beside him, one, unknown.
 'Welcome to this low cot!' he joyful cried,
 And up to Oddune came full courteously,
 And grasp'd his hand; then, turning to the king,
 Welcom'd him o'er and o'er, as tho' the words, 305
 Oft told, new sense convey'd and better shew'd
 The master's hospitality. The king
 Thus, with mild accent, his discourse began.
 'Thou hast a tranquil dwelling in this wood,
 'Far from a noisy world. If well I deem, 310
 'Content dwells with thee. Am I right old man?'
 'Aye, very right,' he answered 'I have thrived
 'Long in this glen, and every day I live
 'Makes me more cheerful.'

Alfred thus pursued, 315
 'Thy health is good.'—'Truly a healthier man'
 The woodman thus replied, 'lives not to share
 'Heaven's bounty. When a boy my father cried,
 'Hear what my father told me,—'Rise betimes,
 'Let thy first thoughts ascend to heavenly things, 320
 'Be frugal, fear not work, and never drink
 'Aught but this brook.'¹³⁹ 'Twas there when he was young,
 'And still beside my cottage, on it runs,
 'I know not whence, nor where, nor of it heed,
 'So that it serve my purpose. There it is, 325
 'And purer water never quench'd the thirst
 'Of some poor trav'ller, toil-worn, when the eve
 'Closed on a sultry day. These words I heard—
 'When young, a careless urchin, who, in truth,
 'All things alike forgot, save food and sport, 330
 'Yet how I cannot tell, these passing words
 , Hung on my fancy.'—

‘ Husband !’ cried the dame,
 ‘ These strangers brave, heed not the tale of thine
 ‘ So often told ! What is the brook to them ?’ 335

Cried Alfred, ‘ Mother stay ! we do indeed
 ‘ Regard thy husband’s story. Speak thou on !
 ‘ We like the simple language of the heart.’
 The woodman answer’d. ‘ Well if I *may* speak,
 ‘ They struck my fancy, and from that good hour, 340
 ‘ Down e’en to this, I often think of them,
 ‘ For I have found the words so true, that now,
 ‘ Were my son living, I should say the same
 ‘ When death approach’d.’—‘ Dost thou a son deplore ?’
 The king thus answer made. ‘ What caus’d his death ?’ 345
 The old man wiped his eye and said, ‘ I thought
 ‘ Never again the story to have told ;
 ‘ But as I like thy countenance, and seem
 ‘ Free in discourse, why thou shalt have the tale.
 (When from her seat the aged woman rose 350
 And pass’d the door.)

‘ A hopeful son was mine !
 ‘ He never paid the bad man’s penalty !¹⁴⁰
 ‘ Nor stopp’d the flying criminal all pale :¹⁴¹
 ‘ I lov’d him, he was dutiful and good. 355
 ‘ This was the cause that made him leave his home.
 ‘ To the far distant church he once had gone,
 ‘ ’Twas on a Sunday, and he went to hear
 ‘ The preaching, and exchange some bows and darts
 ‘ For clothes then needed. When, as night came on, 360
 ‘ He reach’d our home. I never saw a face
 ‘ So changed, an eye so wild, so fix’d a look
 ‘ Of something that within seem’d hard to say.
 ‘ His mother cried ; (the aged woman there
 ‘ Sitting so still on yonder stone) she cried, 365
 ‘ What ails thee, son ! speak, for I fear me much
 ‘ Harm hath pursued thee !’ ‘ No,’ he said, ‘ no harm ;

‘But there I trow, is harm enough abroad.
‘Have ye not heard the news?’ ‘No,’ said we both.
‘When thus he answer made.

‘ I fear for you,

' My parents ! for o'er Saxon ground there roam
' Bands of fierce men, so fierce, that had one told,
' A stranger this my tale, ye straight would cry,
' It cannot be ! ' In truth 'tis hard to think 375

‘That such men live! You late beheld me go
‘To the far Church, with my well-temper’d bows,
‘To barter,¹⁴² but, most piteous was the sight!
‘No church was there! it was a ruin’d pile!
‘And ’tween the walls, yet standing, there arose 380

‘ Columns of smoke. I wist not what it meant ;
‘ But doubting that some accident had thus
‘ Destroy’d the well known structure, I look’d round,
‘ Cautious, then thro’ the darken’d archway pass’d,
‘ Fill’d with distrust obscure. Awhile I paused ! 385

'Whether to enter further, or return
'Back with my burden. As I pondered thus,
'Silent, and listening to the rushing noise
'Of smoke and cracking wood : I heard a groan,
'Slow drawn ! more thoughtful I appear'd. Again, 390
'The same heart-rending groan ! it was a sound
'That made my very blood—curdle, my limbs
'Quake as thou see'st them now from memory.'

'These were his words. My son then farther spake.'
'With cautious step, and trembling, I advanced, 395

‘ And saw a monk, pale as the ashen bark,
‘ Yet smear’d with blood. He rais’d his languid eyes
‘ And turn’d them on me ; when he feebly said,
‘ If friend thou art, one favour do I ask,
‘ Bring hither yonder stone, and at my head

‘Hurl it in haste, for agony supreme
‘Preys on me!’ Nearer to the spot I drew,
‘And, looking at the man, knew well his face;

'Twas father Burnulf! that good priest, who oft
 ' Had told us of our duties to high heaven, 405
 ' And fellow man; whom often we have heard,
 ' Like one who brought glad tidings, in the church,
 ' Then fall'n, in which he lay.—I rais'd his head;
 ' He knew me, and thus spake.' 'What is it thou?
 ' Ah! never wilt thou listen more, good youth! 410
 ' To aged Burnulf! At his hour of death,
 ' Thou comest! Fetch yon stone, and for the past,
 ' Shew me this kindness!' 'Never,' cried my boy!
 ' Support thyself with what thou oft hast said,
 ' Me would support in death! and tell me straight 415
 ' What means this overthrow?'

The priest replied,

' I will strive hard to say, and to suppress
 ' Pain's influence. Thou speakest right, young man!
 ' Faith should bestow her solace. Now my tongue, 420
 ' Tho' parch'd and grown unwieldy, shall declare
 ' This woeful change, but I must tell it brief,
 ' My breath is short. This ruin is the Danes,
 ' From some far-distant land, a wolfish race,
 ' Fierce and unfeeling, scorning God and man, 425
 ' Have landed here, and Alfred our brave king,
 ' In vain resists them. They are terrible
 ' As ocean when he roareth,¹⁴³ and like him
 ' Delight in blood. They here surrounded us,—
 ' As late at Croyland,¹⁴⁴ bent on waste and spoil, 430
 ' And having forced the doors, they, scattering death,
 ' Rush'd in. Thou view'st the ruin, and around
 ' Lie my dead brethren. Plunder still their aim,
 ' No pity in their heart, the Danes pass'd on.
 ' Warring with mortal wounds, as thou may'st see, 435
 ' I still surviv'd, and many, like me, felt,
 ' Life wavering, and with groans we fill'd the air:
 ' But for these many hours, no groans but mine
 ' Have sounded, and they too will cease, tho' soon,

‘Not soon enough!—

440

‘My dying words are these—

‘Go arm thyself! Fight manfully! Find out

‘Thy monarch’s standard! for, in such a cause

‘’Twere villainy to man, and insult vile

‘To heaven above, idly to stand and gaze!

445

‘Hence, from this scene of ruin, and as once

‘I bade thee seek with all men peace and love;

‘I now command thee with a prophet’s voice,

‘Consume our foes! For whilst the Saxon arm

‘Fails to destroy them, piteous is the state

450

‘For all who live!’—

‘The good man’s voice grew faint,

‘And now with harder labourings, distant far,

‘One from the other, he essay’d to breathe,

‘But, difficult, when back he stretch’d himself,

455

‘And calmly died.—So hither, cried my son,

‘I haste to tell my purpose! Thou art old!

(Looking at me, who speechless stood) he said,

‘And well may’st plead excuse from martial toil;

‘But if my arm should fail at such an hour,

460

‘To wield the sword, and in my country’s cause,

‘Fight manfully; if I should shun my king,

‘And in this forest live inglorious

‘When ruin and the enemy stalk round—

‘I should not well deserve to be thy son.’

465

‘I need not tell you, strangers! what my thoughts

‘At this recital, and if long I paused

‘Whether to bid my *brave* son go or stay.

‘That night he left us! These were his last words.

‘I go, my honour’d parents! to discharge

470

‘Duty’s high call, but once again, I trust

‘To see your faces glad, and round our board

‘Talk of past perils.’ ‘Then he left our home!’

‘And hast thou never heard,’ the king replied,

- 'Of this thy son?' 'No, answer'd the old man, 475
 'Had he been living, we should long ere this
 'Have seen his face, for he was kind at heart,
 'All that a sire could wish; so good was he,
 'If heaven had prosper'd him with this world's wealth,
 'No likelier man had rear'd monastic pile, 480
 'With heart munificent.¹⁴⁵ Oh! I may say
 'For many a month I ne'er retired to rest
 'But in my dreams I saw him; yet that time
 'Now is gone by, and I am pleas'd to think,
 'Tho' dead, he perish'd fighting for his king. 485
 'Forgive these tears!' Alfred replied, 'old man!
 'Thou had'st not well deserved so good a son,
 'If thou could'st think, unmov'd, upon his death.'
 'He was a hopeful son,' the woodman cried;
 'Duteous and kind, from early youth the same,— 490
 'Like the fair apple-tree, when spring draws near,
 'His buds were blossoms. Few of woman born
 'Have left this earth, better prepared to pass
 'Death's scrutiny.'
 'He *was* a noble son!' 495
 The king replied, 'aye, master, he was good,'
 The woodman said. 'But I shall see him yet!
 'There is a better world. Altho' alone,
 'And far from human-kind, we love to think
 'Upon that last and best inheritance. 500
 'Not boastful, know, O, stranger! I am rich;
 'Endued with affluence of the highest kind.
 'I have some *portions*, written full and clear,
 'Of God's *Good Word*—in mine own proper tongue,
 'Brought from the distant speech, by our good king,— 505
 'So learned, and so brave!—Heaven prosper him!
 'These *pages* are my joy!—At close of day,
 'At morn, and with the sun high over head:
 'I ponder on the prospects it unfolds;
 'For there I learn of an eternal state! 510

' And of a Saviour!—happy they, thrice told,
 ' Who boast the *whole* of what I own a *part*.
 ' Bless'd with the prospect of that heritage,
 ' So certain and so near! each night and morn
 ' We laud our Maker; feeling in our hearts 515
 ' The fervent gratitude; for here our eyes
 ' Beheld earth's changes: night preceding morn,
 ' And morn the night, in long succession; spring,
 ' And all the seasons, in an endless course,
 ' Moving around us, bidding us arise 520
 ' And praise the Highest, who from nothing call'd
 ' This wondrous frame! And pleasant is the thought
 ' Of many a word once heard in that fair church,
 ' Built by our Alfred,¹⁴⁶ whom all hearts adore;
 ' And where my mind was raised to those good things, 525
 ' An Advocate!—a world of blessedness!
 ' When to be heard again! Ah, tell me when!'

' Your's is true wisdom,' cried the king, ' which first
 ' Descended from above, and still directs
 ' Our hopes, our better prospects to the skies. 530
 ' This knowledge will remain, whilst all beside
 ' The whirlwind, death, like chaff, shall bear away.
 ' I honor thee, old man! Soon do I trust,
 ' That that good church, and many kindred piles,
 ' Will bless this land, where, others, like thyself, 535
 ' May hear of a Redeemer, the one hope
 ' To cheer benighted man. But father, say!
 ' How cam'st thou in this place? These words of thine
 ' Speak not a woodman's mind.'

He thus replied. 540

' I am a woodman; here my father dwelt,
 ' And here have I; and if my words bespeak
 ' Other than woodman's mind, the gift I owe—
 ' To parents, long removed from earth to heaven:
 ' But, the especial honour, to one name— 545

' My mother,—would I pay ! She taught me first
 ' To bend my knee !—to lip my Saviour's praise !
 ' To fix my best affections on that world—
 ' Where happiness is found without alloy !
 ' My mother ! O, my mother ! may I reach 550
 ' That bless'd assemblage of the ransom'd ones,
 ' Where thou art found—never to part again !—
 ' And I may say, the seed first sown by her,
 ' On whom I linger longest in my dreams !
 ' Was nourish'd, water'd to maturity, 555
 ' Chief by a Hermit, on the forest's verge,
 ' Who to great Rome hath gone on pilgrimage ; ¹⁴⁷
 ' Tho' tied to earth, allied to saints above !
 ' And many a tear, the country round—will shed
 ' When he is dead and gone !—From dwelling thus 560
 ' In one long quietness, our minds have learn'd
 ' True wisdom, by believing happiness,
 ' Confined to no one spot of earth, may thrive
 ' When smil'd on—by the God whom we adore,
 ' E'en in our humble cottage. Here our days 565
 ' Pass on unruffled, and, till death draw near,
 ' Here be our resting-place.'

When, in new tone,
 The woodman thus again. ' Pardon my words !
 ' I never roam to learn what tidings strange 570
 ' Earth teems with, but a lingering wish to know
 ' How runs the world—on some great scale,
 ' And interest large, makes me inquire of you—
 ' What news abroad ? now doubly anxious grown,
 ' Since the sad tidings borne us by our son. 575
 ' What are these foes, and whence do they proceed ?—
 ' Scattering such horrors o'er our happy land ?'

Alfred replied, ' Alas, thou good old man !
 ' To tell thee of the state of human things
 ' Would leave thy spirit, not as now it is, 580

'Peaceful and calm. Thy race is almost run,
 'And fit it is, that thou should'st never more
 'Meddle with earthly ways. Here rest awhile,
 'Most happy in thine ignorance.—Old man,
 'I claim one favour. Lend me yonder harp,¹⁴⁸ 585
 'Hanging beside thy hearth. I will again
 'Return it with warm thanks.'—The woodman cried,
 'Stranger 'tis thine! I give it with good will;
 'But I must say to thee—preserve it safe;
 'It was my son's! He many an hour hath sat 590
 'Upon yon verdant bank, and, as the sun
 'Slowly declined, so cheerily hath play'd,
 'With midnight songsters, making the far wood
 'Ring with his melody, that I had hoped
 'This one memorial of more happy days 595
 'Long to have kept; but in thy countenance
 'There is so much of what my son once was,
 'That I *must* give it thee!'

'Thank thee old man;'

'Alfred replied. 'This harp I well will keep, 600
 'And prize it truly; ever when beheld
 'Thinking of thee. One kindness more I crave,
 'Pardon my prayer. It is an honest cause
 'For which I ask the favour. I am bound
 'To look the character I do not bear, 605
 'Many to serve. Hast thou no humble garb,
 'Awhile to lend me?'—'Yea' the woodman cried;
 'My son's shalt thou possess. Accept the boon.
 'The modest dress will honour him who wears it.
 'I give it with my blessing on thy head.' 615
 'The king replied. 'Thank thee, good cottager!
 'My *garb*, till my return, I leave with thee,
 'And this my *sword*. Erelong, I fain would hope,
 'Again to see thee.'

In his rustic dress, 620

Now duly clad, like the young forester,

Alfred appears ; when, gazing at the sire,
 (Who pensive look'd, thinking, depress'd at heart,
 How like his son, the wearer of that garb !)
 ' Tell me,' cried Alfred in his kindest tone, 625
 ' What is the care that shadows most thy brow ;—
 ' For sorrow in some form will show itself,
 ' The unvarying lot of frail humanity.'

The woodman answer'd, 'burdens I have known,
 ' Some hard, and long-continued, but, at length, 630
 ' Like all the round of earth's calamities,
 ' Aye, and its pleasures too, they died away.
 ' E'en let them go. To compensate their loss,
 ' Mine is the peaceful conscience,—the sweet joy
 ' Religion yields—that softener of the heart, 635
 ' That balm and pledge of an inheritance,
 ' Erelong to crown my hopes. But if one pang
 ' Still lingers in my breast,—from this it springs ;
 ' The sight of want, and hard calamity,
 ' With power so feeble, to arrest, remove, 640
 ' Or mitigate the evil. Selwood's shades,
 ' Thick peopled, in their spacious bounds, contain—
 ' Many who, like myself, secluded dwell—
 ' These woods the world to them ! who oft endure—
 ' Privations, hardships ;—bitterly deplored— 645
 ' By one who fain would aid them. Mine, a heart
 ' (If self-deception lead me not astray)
 ' Which would luxuriate in the aim divine—
 ' To lessen suff'ring,—ignorance dark, illume,
 ' And virtue cherish,—but thus circumscribed 650
 ' By poverty,—that dares not *look abroad* !—
 ' Save when soft pity, prudence *will* defy,
 ' And then from pittance, pittance may be given :
 ' So that with pangs, known only to the Highest,
 ' Reluctant I retire, beholding those— 655
 ' More privileg'd—applauded, envied not,

‘ Who, in their wealth abounding, can devise
 ‘ The kind and liberal thing. Heaven’s will be done !
 ‘ My treasure is—a word,—a sigh—a tear.’

‘ Alfred (his spirit touch’d) thus answer made. 660
 ‘ I will accept this harp, this rustic dress,
 ‘ Memorials sacred !—If in man be truth,
 ‘ And heaven should spare from the infuriate Danes,
 ‘ Thou shalt for these receive beyond their worth.
 ‘ Woodman ! I would, but dare not utter more. 665
 Hand me thine harp !—The monarch swept the chords.

Oh, charity ! while fame, with lightning car,
 Flashes brief splendor o’er the hero’s grave,
 Thou sitt’st upon thy rock, amid the wave,
 Calm as the silver moon, and evening star,
 That o’er the billows cast their image far,
 Like them unmoved by storms that round thee rave.
 Ah ! from thine eye I mark the tear descend !
 Thou thinkest of the foes that man dismay ;
 Upon the crowd who have no home or friend,
 Upon the orphan—worn by want away,—
 The lonely widow—lingering out her day,
 And tho’ too poor to succour, thou dost send
 The look benign, that oft has care beguiled—
 Soothing in silence sorrow’s drooping child.

Whilst in his wicker chair, with heart entranced,
 The woodman listen’d, every note awaked
 Sweet recollections, calling up the thought
 Of days, long pass’d, when, with that harp, his son 670
 Beguiled the evening hour, by pouring forth
 Amid the calm consoling quiet round,
 Songs to His praise,—the bounteous Lord of All !

Half loath to interrupt, Alfred thus spake.
 ‘ My time is short. I now must bid adieu. 675

'Receive my thanks. Thy words, to mem'ry dear,
 'Not soon will be forgotten. Fare thee well!'—
 The woodman grasp'd his hand. No words he spake.
 After a pause, by silence sanctified,
 Alfred re-pass'd the threshold. 680

At the stone,
 At which the mother soothed her sorrowing mind,
 She heard the harp!—so long neglected, sounds
 That made her rise her head, in wonderment!'
 She listens, doubtful! 'Can it be?' she cried. 685
 'They are the same sweet notes!' She seized her staff
 And hastened toward her dwelling.—

As the king
 Came from the door, clad in the well-known dress,
 Bearing the harp, 'My son! my son!' she cried. 690
 'My long-lost son!' and eager clasp'd him round.
 No kindred greet—no answering grasp was there!
 Her recollection came! Her hand relaxed!—
 She look'd upon the king, and pale exclaim'd,
 'That face is not my son's! God prosper thee 695
 'For this delusion!'—Thro' her cottage door,
 Feebly she pass'd.

Now grasping Oddune's hand,
 Alfred, in silence gave the parting look—
 Well-understood; when, with a spirit firm, 700
 He to explore the Danish camp, set off,
 Clothed in his new attire, and on his back
 Bearing the harp: yet could he not conceal—
 What nature told. His was no common look.—
 To him who in the face the soul could read, 705
 There was an aspect, dignified, yet mild,
 That told the monarch; and tho' half obscured
 By poverty's plain garb, yet what appear'd,—
 The truth reveal'd.—As doth the broken bow,
 Shining in heaven's wide vault, when some dark cloud, 710
 Dividing, glides between, which, to the eye,

Yields but a partial glory.

Toward the Danes

Oddune beheld him pass! when, to himself,
Sorrowing he cried. 'No more shall I behold 715
'Thy face, oh king! Destruction thou hast sought,
'And thou wilt find it! yet, thy fame shall reach
'The distant time! For thee the enraptured bard
'Shall strike the harp, and tell posterity
'Of Alfred's worth, who, in these years forlorn, 720
'When darkness reign'd, when superstition scowl'd,
'Rose like a star miraculous, and spread
'O'er earth, a light, which when this age hath pass'd,
'Nay, age on age, down to the farthest time,
'Shall still be visible!' 725

He watch'd the king,

'Till in the mellowed distance he was lost.
And when he thought of all the secret snares,
The dangers and dismays that throng'd his path,—
His sorrow bore resemblance to the sire 730
Who, many a long year to the son beloved,
Has told of virtue and her charms, and mark'd
Upon his cheek, the glow of kindling worth;
Then, at the hour of separation, sees
His son go forth into an evil world, 735
Where quick-sands spread, and where the whirlpool deep
Lurks to o'erwhelm the innocent.

He sigh'd,

And to the distant castle urged his way.

A L F R E D :

BOOK XIV.

ARGUMENT.

Alfred's visit to the Danish camp.

CAUTIOUS and slow the royal harper moved,
Onward toward Kenwith's castle. One so used
To feel the hard earth's pillow, dreaded not
The midnight hour, advancing. He beheld,
Clear from the hill-top, where he stood, the sun, 5
In his effulgence, bathing Cambria's land,
(The intervening sea one mass of fire !)
Whose mountain peaks, precipitous, were clothed
With a magnificence unspeakable,
That awed the spirit, and o'er heaven diffused 10
A splendour—too intense for mortal sight !
One little cloud, dark, ominous, remote,
Comes sailing onward, but it vanishes
Before a scene so charged with brilliancy.
Alfred awhile entranced, stood motionless ; 15
When, to beguile the solitary hour,
He seized the harp. He could not choose but sing.

If hour there be, when pleasure fills the breast,
As nature, robed in beauty, sleeps profound ;
When woods and streams, in fairy vision round,
Reflect the peaceful splendors of the west,—

That hour is this!—In pomp austerer drest,
 Now Severn kindles thro' his ample bound,
 And Cambria's lordly hills in glory lie,
 O'er-canopied by clouds of gorgeous dye;
 While sea-birds sport amid the sapphire wave,—
 Rolling the line eternal to the strand.—
 Ah! there, a solitary vessel brave
 Glides glowing on, by fostering zephyrs fanned.
 Our Empress Isle, profuse of pearl and gem,
 Here wears her proud and matchless diadem.

Emblem of human things. What change is there!
 The clouds are gathering blackness! Night comes on!
 The sun, the hill-top, and the concave wide 20
 Munificent in glory, all is fled!
 Darkness still deepens! Thro' the rayless sky
 The winds arise, precursor of the storm!
 It comes!—the hurricane, in terrors dress'd!
 Ah! there the *vessel* brave, so late, in pride 25
 Gliding triumphant o'er the sportive wave,
 Conflicting with the billows, now ascends!—
 Again explores the watery vale below!—
 Braving the angry surge—rocks, perils round!
 She labours hard! The lightnings dart their fires 30
 Successive, follow'd by intenser night—
 With thunders, loud, careering thro' the sky!
 Would she may bear the beatings of the storm!
 Alfred awhile, the sight and sound endured.
 He hears—with the unutterable pang, 35
 The seaman's voice—borne fitful on the blast!
 Ah! vain their cry! no mortal man can save!
 In meditation lost, he seized his harp,
 And pours his notes of pity on the gale.

Severn! thy billows lash the rocky shore
 Heard terrible, thro' midnight reigning round!
 The lightnings flash, the winds imperious sound!
 While thunders, fierce, from nature's awful store,

Traverse wide heaven in loud and lengthen'd roar,
 Till crash on crash, convulsive shakes the ground !
 Voices faint mingle with the troubled sky !—
 It is the ship-men's voice, who aid require !
 In pity to the suffering seaman's cry,
 Clouds ! check your fury ! Tempests ! stay your ire !—
 That fervid blast of elemental fire !
 Ah ! there the vessel sinks !—no succour nigh !
 'The winds are hush'd !—the thunders cease to rave !
 And all is still—but the dark rolling wave !

Long, and in loneliness, the beating storm— 40
 Alfred withstood, then, pillow'd on his harp,
 His heart to heaven uplifted, he, on earth,
 Stretches his weary limbs—sleep far away,
 And waits the morn, with all its unknown cares.

Now, in the orient, streaks of grey appear. 45
 The king beheld, and, with a heart devout,
 Upon the green-sward kneeling—pour'd the prayer—
 To heaven's High Ruler ; when, his spirit felt
 Calm solace, and toward Kenwith's lofty towers.
 Fearless he pass'd.—The trying hour is come ! 50
 He sees the castle !—Denmark's hordes around !
 Whilst on their numbers gazing, a cold chill
 Creeps thro' his frame !—'These feelings,' cried the king
 ' Nature must own, they spring not from this heart.'

Yet Alfred felt, while gazing at the Danes, 55
 Like youth, who, on a distant voyage bent,
 Leaves friends and parents, trav'ling, stout at heart,
 Who never yet the ocean wide has seen ;
 And when at first he spies, from some high hill
 The wat'ry world beneath,—clear, motionless, 60
 Stretching in long expanse of meadow green,
 He shivers, serious grown, and scarce believes
That plain, so vast, faint blending with the sky
 Can be old ocean !—'till at length is seen—

The light skiff sailing, and the breakers' play. 65
 Ah! then he owns, and wonders, and half thinks,
 His roving check'd, how wiser far, to rest
 Calm in his in-land dwelling, 'till, at length,
 Familiar grown with the terrific sight,
 His heart returns, and all his perils flee. 70
 Thus Alfred felt. Whilst in the vale beneath
 He spied the Danes, unnumber'd, in array
 Of direful aspect; he half look'd behind,
 Thinking of safe retreat in Selwood's wilds;
 Till the first feeling master'd, firm of soul, 75
 He, from the rock of adamant, his mind!
 Gazed on unterrified.

As thus he stood,
 He heard a noise, and, looking round, beholds
 A hostile band of Danes—approaching fast! 80
 When from his back the king his harp prepared,
 And struck the merry note.—Near him they draw,
 When Alfred ceas'd his tune, and bent profound,
 His cap presenting for some recompense.—
 Aloud, the Danish leader cried,—‘Young man! 85
 ‘But for that instrument, thou hadst, ere this,
 ‘Grappled with death. Who art thou? What thy name?
 ‘Speak, or this sword shall with thy heart's blood play!’

Alfred replied, ‘I am a wandering man.
 ‘Honest, tho' poor, and used with this good harp 90
 ‘To play, as late ye heard me. Would you more,
 ‘Of music hear?’ ‘Aye, play!’ exclaimed the Dane.
 The king then touch'd his harp with such sweet notes
 Of tenderest minstrelsy, that the warm tear ¹⁴⁹
 Within his eye, each iron-hearted Dane 95
 Felt start. One cried, ‘’Tis well! Now play again.’
 When Alfred with a bolder finger swept
 The sounding string, and roused the martial soul
 In all who heard, making their wild eyes glare,—

Their limbs, in frantic attitude dance round, 100
 Till, fearful for himself and harp, he stopp'd.
 When a ferocious Dane enraged exclaim'd,
 Raising his sword,

‘Thou art a Saxon man !

‘Unused are we to let such pass unharm'd, 105
 ‘And doubtful now I stand, whether to spare,
 ‘Or with this sword consume thee.’ Once again,
 Alfred his harp uplifted, and began
 A mild and soul-subduing song, of one,
 A shepherd youth, who lov'd a shepherdess, 110
 ‘Mid winter's snows, fated one grave to find.

‘Sweet are thy notes, young minstrel, cried the Dane,
 ‘But thou art still a Saxon !’ As the king—
 To pour the song, again upraised his harp,
 The haughty Dane exclaim'd,—‘Withhold thy hand ! 115
 ‘I scorn thy melody ! Say whence thou cam'st,
 ‘And instant, as thou valuest life, declare,
 ‘If aught thou know'st of Alfred, or what path
 ‘Oddune his Chief pursued.’—

When, thus the king : 120

‘I am a simple harper, and I love
 ‘My harp so well, so little do I heed
 ‘The bustling world and all the strifes of men,
 ‘That, wandering unconcern'd, I know no care,
 ‘But to preserve my harp, and sit at ease.’ 125

‘Speak ! or this sword !’ exclaim'd the angry Dane.
 ‘Know'st thou of Alfred ?—of his place and state ?’
 When, wild of look, again the king replied ;—
 ‘In wandering o'er this land, I sometimes hear
 ‘Of him you ask for. Is he not our king ?’ 130
 ‘A simple fellow,’ cried a Dane. Forbear !
 ‘Let us depart. From him we nought can learn,
 ‘And, 'tis most manifest, can nothing fear.’

When on they march'd.

Alfred beheld them go, 135

And felt like one, a northern mariner,
 Who, sailing near that vortex, far renown'd
 Through all the Arctic, finds, half wild with dread,
 His vent'rous bark, check'd in her bold career,
 And moving toward the fatal gulf, that roars 140
 Loud in his hearing, whilst no gales arise—
 To check th' inevitable fate, and fast,
 Fast, and more fast, the vessel moves to death!
 When, rushing thro' the clouds, the wind is heard!
 And soon it fills the sails, and while his eye 145
 Gazed on destruction, bears him safe away.

A secret dread now came upon the king,
 He saw one peril o'er, and tho' he strove
 To dissipate all fear, he could but view,
 That morning, as a presage of worse ills, 150
 Approaching fast. Contemplating he stood,
 And to himself in serious mood thus spake:
 'This hour my life is spared, from unlook'd cause,—
 'Sudden deception! May it not succeed
 'In season yet to come? Once Israel's king 155
 'Found safety by assumption such as this,
 'And why not I? This garb I have not worn,
 'And a reluctant feeling wars within;
 'Yet when my country calls for sacrifice,
 'Shall I deny her? Heaven vouchsafe his aid! 160
 'This my resolve. Hence meet I undismay'd,
 'All perils and all circumstance!'—He now
 Draws near the foe, and when he saw their tents,
 And knew that he was mark'd by Danes, he cried,
 'Danger before me stands, but death behind.' 165

He pass'd the centinel, who saw his harp,
 And gave him passage. Through the ranks he sped,

Like one who business sought. Now bolder grown,
 He on his harp play'd cheerily, when soon,
 Full many a Dane, around the minstrel stands, 170
 And listen'd joyous, when, one cried aloud,
 'Is not this man a Saxon? Dreads he not
 'The Danish camp?' Another thus replied;
 'A Saxon truly, but a man who cares,
 'For neither Dane nor Saxon; thee or me. 175
 'So he may eat and live.' His cheerful song
 Now Alfred ceased, and as the custom was,
 Like humble suppliant, of the listeners round
 Ask'd slender pittance.

'What would'st thou receive?' 180
 One pleasantly inquired; 'We have our swords,
 'Our bucklers, and good darts, which thee might pierce,
 'When at some distance, but, (dissatisfied)
 'If more thou seek, play on!' Th' obedient king
 Striving to win their smiles by courtesy, 185
 Heard, and his harp to other cadence strung;
 Then sought for recompence. The Dane exclaim'd,
 'Thou scorner of our gods, and Denmark's foe,
 'I have half mind to send thee to the realms
 'Where Hela reigns.' When grasping the king's harp, 190
 He would have dash'd it down, but Alfred cried,
 'Take not a poor man's bread! his only store,
 'With which he cheats his sorrows. Yield that harp,
 'Useless to thee, to me most dear.' The Dane
 As Alfred spake, to banter with his smiles, 195
 Awhile forebore, and when the king had ceased,
 He raised again his arm.—That instant pass'd
 Guthrum, the Danish chieftain. Near he came,
 And viewing well the instrument, inquired
 Who own'd it, and the cause of that sad voice, 200
 Which struck his ear.—Alfred beheld the chief,
 And drawing nigh, replied, whilst bending low,
 'It is thy servant's! Pity me, my lord!

‘ A stranger, and to me restore yon harp.’

‘ Who art thou?’ cried the Dane, ‘ and wherefore here?’ 205

‘ I am a simple man,’ the king replied,

‘ Who loves sweet minstrelsy ; and oft at eve,

‘ In lonely wanderings, by the slow brook’s side,

‘ I pass my time ; and whilst my harp is heard,

‘ Birds on their wings move slow, or perch around 210

‘ On bush, or tree, to catch one passing note,

‘ With which to charm the ear of lonely man,

‘ List’ning so earnest, that he half forgets

‘ The woes that made him lonely.’ Fearing, now,

His speech too luminous for wilder’d man, 215

Then he pursued. ‘ Oft as the stars are up

‘ And I can hear the night-birds whistling loud,

‘ I touch my harp to solemn music, sounds

‘ That give the air a stillness. I have seen,

‘ High in the heavens, the moon suspend her course 220

‘ To listen to my strains, whilst the proud trees,

‘ So lofty over head, have hush’d their noise,

‘ And only to the loud gale bent themselves.

‘ When I have ceased. There is my gentle harp.

‘ And if I ne’er should gain it, I must roam, 225

‘ Mourning, this land about ; or, in a bark,

‘ Sail up and down the ocean, calling loud

‘ On my lost friend ; or, roused to fiercer wrath,

‘ When’er the stars of night—shoot their red balls,

‘ Fly after them, and e’er their flight hath ceased, 230

‘ Seize, and direct their unextinguished course

‘ To him who robb’d me.’—Guthrum cried, ‘ Poor man !

‘ A wand’ring lunatic, that here hath stray’d

‘ Unconscious. Instant yield the harp, oh Dane !

‘ For tho’ we war on Saxons, we will spare 235

‘ Whom gods have warred on.’ Alfred took the harp,

And bending to the chief, with thankful heart,

Pursued his onward way.

With cautious eye

He marked the Danes, their number, and their state; 240
 Proud in their force, of victory confident,
 Incautious grown, and scorning their weak foe.¹⁵⁰
 Now of his queen he thought, and that her ear
 Might catch some sound, some desultory note,
 He touch'd the harp, and thus, disconsolate, 245
 Sang as he play'd. 'Oh, thou my soul's desire,
 'Where'er thou art, come forth, and let me see,
 'Thy long-lost countenance.'

The men who stray'd

With the wild harper, heard, and thus exclaim'd : 250
 'He calleth now the moon, but he shall call
 'For many an hour, ere from her distant course
 'She answer him.' Again he struck the harp,
 Veiling his song in words of mystery.
 'Life of my life, and idol of my heart, 255
 'Come forth and see thy minstrel! Sick and sad,
 'He wanders through the sea, and earth, and air,
 'To meet thy glance, beloved! Look around,
 'And ease his pain, who never joy hath felt
 'Since thou didst leave him. From the clouds above 260
 'Appear, bless'd spirit! from yon purple cloud,
 'Behold me faithful still, nor let me more
 'Wander through earth, estranged from happiness,

Now thro' the gate-way he essay'd to pass,
 When one, resisting, cried, 'Stranger, thy name?' 265
 'My name,' replied the king, 'is with the moon,
 'And sun, and stars. Upon the rainbow bright,
 'Laughing I stride, and when the night draws near,
 'Upon the beach I roam, to pick the shells,
 'Or on the star-fish read my name, and sing 280
 'The merry song.'

One drawing near exclaim'd,

'A wand'ring lunatic, whom Guthrum's self

'Bade us respect.' This said, he pass'd the gate,
 Harping and chaunting cheerily, whilst crowds 285
 Fast followed him, lauding his sprightly airs.
 Again he spake. 'Oh show thy lovely face!
 'Charmer come forth, and bless me with the sight
 'So long desired. Upon yon silver cloud
 'Let me behold thee, so shall fervent joy 290
 'Bound at my heart, and I will laugh aloud,
 'And sing, as now I sing, my cares away.'

While the king pour'd his melancholy strain,
 A damsel, Guthrum's daughter, earnest cries,
 'Harper, haste hither.' Alfred heard a voice, 295
 And looking round, beheld her. At the words,
 Ceasing his song, he leaves th' admiring crowd,
 Foll'wing his guide.—It was the castle hall
 Whereto they went. 'Harper! sing forth,' she cried,
 'To soothe the sorrows of yon mourner's heart. 300
 'Nursing her cares, she sits beside the fire
 'From morning e'en till night.' Alfred look'd round,—
 He saw Alswitha!—By the hearth she sat,
 And at the fire intensely gazing, saw,
 Or seem'd to see, semblance of friend beloved, 305
 Nor of the harper knew, nor who, around,
 Cared any thing, so she might sit and gaze
 In idle contemplation.—

Alfred play'd—
 The song which they had sung in happier days: 310
 She knew the tune! when casting a quick glance
 Upon the Harper, trembling, she exclaim'd—
 'What man art thou?' When, fixing his clear eye
 Full at her, he pronounced no word. She saw!
 She knew the king! and, shudd'ring, turn'd away, 316
 Whilst her big heart throb'd loud. The damsel saw
 (Though kind and faithful to her sorrowing friend)
 The sudden change of countenance both shew'd,

The terror, the surprise ; and, as she look'd
 Around the hall, grown darker, from the night 320
 Approaching slow, and saw the pale blue fire,
 The shadowy world of beings rose ; she seem'd
 Half conscious of some intellectual strife ;
 And dim conjectures so o'erpower'd her mind
 With forms and shapes ideal, that she stood, 325
 Trembling, 'till grown suspicious of herself,
 The place, and all around her, from the hall
 She fled precipitate.

Most like the youth,
 Who through the church-yard roams at dead of night, 330
 And when he to the middle path draws nigh,
 Determines not to fear, yet fears the more
 For all his resolutions ; 'till at length
 Aerial phantoms dance before his eyes ;
 When, to imagined fears resign'd, he seeks 335
 Safety in flight, and faster for his speed
 Thinks fiends pursuing.—So the damsel rush'd
 Out from the hall, and cried to those she saw,
 ' What man is this whom ye have hither brought ?
 ' My heart doth quake.' The waiting band replied, 340
 ' It is a Saxon harper, wandering here
 ' In his mad fits of lunacy. No harm
 ' Hath he achieved ?' ' No harm,' the damsel said,
 ' But I do fear again to enter there,
 ' Go ye and bring him forth. But, mark me well, 345
 ' The woman is my friend. Molest her not.'
 The Danes rush in, and there the minstrel spy,
 Kneeling before the woman : him they bore
 From out the hall. Alswitha saw the sight,
 And trembled as her death-call she had heard. 350

Like famished birds around their prey, the Danes
 Again encircle Alfred, crying loud,
 A song, O, harper !' Said the weary King,

‘This evening spare me ; on the coming morn
‘Your will, be mine ; now must I rest myself.’ 355
Yet vain had been his pleadings, had not sounds,
Imperious, call’d them to their nightly tents.
Now, left with midnight, Alfred stretch’d himself,
Heart-sick, and weary, on the chilling ground :
And when the tempest of his mind seem’d hush’d, 360
And sleep advancing, on the midnight gale,
Shouts of loud mirth were heard, and revelry.
When Alfred thus look’d up to Heaven, and spake :

‘Parent and Guardian of all mortal things !
‘The seraphim and worm thou view’st alike !— 365
‘Thou seest me, Oh, Father ! Thou behold’st
‘All living things ! Thy power it was which screen’d
‘Isaac from death. Thine arm hath oft appear’d
‘For Patriarch and Prophet, men who placed
‘Their confidence in Thee ! Almighty Sire ! 370
‘Screen me in this dark hour !’ ¹⁵¹. Mid hopes and fears,
Again on earth the King reclined his head,
And, sleepless lingered till the morning light.

A L F R E D :

BOOK XV.

ARGUMENT.

Alfred's visit to the Danish camp.—Scene, the Castle. Present, Ivar and Hubba, Guthrum enters.

‘HUBBA, restrain thy wrath!’ Ivar exclaim’d,
‘Nor thus indulge insatiate thirst of blood.
‘Thy words are frantic! Thou dost let revenge
‘All other thoughts absorb. Ere yet too late,
‘And ruin close what madness first began, 5
‘Curb thy proud spirit!’ Hubba thus replied.
‘Tho’ older and entitled to receive
‘Respect from me, thy brother, yet this hour
‘Laughs at all duties. Let the man revolve
‘On niceties of right and wrong, who lolls 10
‘On languor’s pillow, and hath never felt
‘The wrongs I feel. Is Hubba not a man?
‘A Prince? and owns he not a character,
‘Freeborn and prizing courage more than life?
‘Rememb’rest thou thy father? how he scorn’d 15
‘The dastard’s spirit? what he bore to gain
‘The hero’s name? and with what flood-like wrath
‘Whelm’d each presumptuous foe? Shall I, his son,
‘Of him forgetful, see another’s sword
‘Hang over me, and let the greedy hour 20
‘Of vengeance sleep?’

'Yes!' Ivar answered 'Sleep!
 'Forever sleep! My mind misgives itself!
 'I see this kindling spirit, and suspect
 'All is not right. Thou tell'st me that this isle 25
 'Stoops to me; that the vanquished Saxons flee
 'On every side: yet, Hubba! I would learn,
 'Why, conquering, unresisted, we should find,
 'Soon as I reach'd this isle,—Denmark's proud fleet
 'Assail'd, and burnt!—To my unquiet mind, 30
 'It ill forebodeth; and I deem our state,
 'Spite of thy words, not safe. We have a foe,
 'Wary, and with mysterious plottings fill'd;
 'Therefore more dreaded. Dost thou never hope
 'To reach thy native country, and receive 35
 'Some favour'd fair,¹⁶² the fruit of all thy toil?
 'Check then thy wrath! It is a dragon fierce,
 'That will o'ercome thee, if thou yet disdain
 'These warning words.—'I see most manifest
 'We ne'er shall crown our conquests with this isle, 40
 'If discord visit us. Ours must be zeal,
 'United zeal, and to one point alone
 'Our aims all turn'd—the death of him we dread,—
 'Alfred! our one unconquer'd foe! the man
 'Who keeps our swords at bay, and while unseen 45
 'Laughs us to scorn; yet o'er his head now hangs
 'Certain destruction. Hubba, mark my words.
 'If we indulge dissensions, and divide
 'That spirit which alone can win the land,
 'How stand we then?—dishearten'd, and the prey 50
 'Of foes implacable. But I would hope,
 'Thy mind too brave to pore on selfish wrongs,
 'Heedless of these our people. Should we fail—
 'Our duty to perform, in private broils
 'Forget the common cause, what will await 55
 'Thy father's warriors? and, as brave a host
 'As ever hurl'd the lance!'

Hubba replied,

‘Thy words I hear, and when I Guthrum meet,
‘My deeds shall answer thee. The time is past ! 60

‘Why stays he ? Never long’d I more to try

‘My might in battle, than I now desire

‘To measure swords with Guthrum.’—What that noise ?’

Ivar exclaim’d, uprising, ‘to mine ear,

‘Melodious music.’ One drew near and said, 65

‘A Saxon harper, crazed, who here doth roam.’

‘A harper !¹⁵³ and a Saxon ! Bid him in !’

Cried Ivar. In the hall then Alfred came !

He stood before the Danes, who sternly eyed

The bending minstrel, when the chieftain cried, 70

‘Saxon ! how cam’st thou here ? What antidote

‘Hast thou against our swords ?’ The king replied,

‘When the black raven caws, and in the air

‘Witches and wand’ring sprites their revels keep,

‘Loud laughing, with this instrument I raise 75

‘Celestial music. Heard’st thou yester eve

‘The stars, and stately moon, rejoicing, swell

‘My earthly chorus ?’ Wond’ring look’d the Danes,

Alfred continued. ‘Mid’ the ocean waves,

‘Where in his greatness, huge Behemoth swims, 80

‘Shaking the depths of ocean, I abide,

‘The solitary monarch of the flood.

‘Ah ! now I trim the lamp, dim burning blue,

‘In lonely sepulchre.¹⁵⁴ What form is that ?

‘Unknown to earth. Behold it ! There ! A crane ! 85

‘Nay, by my harp, it is a sorcerer’s wand.

‘The time ! what is it ! Ah ! what art thou there ?

‘Sweet innocent, a child ! Nay, spare his tears !

‘Come thou with me !’

When thro’ the door, the king— 90

Essay’d to pass, anxious to leave the tent,

With his imagin'd guest, but Hubba cried,
 'Withhold!' and, turning, spake. 'This frantic man,
 'Whence came he? His strange looks, and words so wild,
 'Might check our doubts, but that I oft have found, 95
 'Reputed fools, wiser than some who charge
 'The fool with folly. Saxon! say, thy name,
 'And if thou know'st of Alfred.'—Cried the king:
 'What is my name? What is the sea-surf call'd
 'At midnight? And who stops to count the sands 100
 'When the waves roar? See'st thou yon louring cloud?
 'Hear'st thou the noise that through the elements
 'Bursts on, and makes the gazer's cheek turn pale—
 'The lightnings learn to pity? Up and down,
 'Up to the clouds, down to the ocean's bed, 105
 'Nightly I go, and when th' expanding waves
 'Make bare the sea-rocks' leaves, I tear them off
 'And round my harp, bind them as now thou se'st.'

'Where is thy king?' aloud the chief exclaim'd.
 'Alfred, to touch some other chord within, 110
 Terror or superstition, thus replied—
 In graver accent, and with look austere.
 'Where is *my* king, did'st thou presume to ask?
 'Down deep in earth; e'en in her central caves!
 'Shall I my hand extend and bid him rise, 115
 'Fierce as the midnight wolf, to look around
 'On thee and me? Or shall I to the grave
 'Instant descend, or, to profounder depths,
 'Where oft I go, and with my potent word,
 'Arouse the earthquake?'— 120

Hubba cried, 'Forbear!

'Call not thy king!' when, turning thus he said
 Slowly to Ivar, 'This mysterious man,
 'I like him not! Ask for no other words;
 'But let him leave our tent, and with him take 125
 'Our mildest accents.' Ivar thus replied:

'Lose not thyself! Tho' evil spirits walk,
 'And teaze mankind with sore perplexities,
 'This is no spirit! By his uncouth words,
 'I see the wand'ring lunatic. His looks 130
 'Plainly tell this. But tho' he may not talk,
 'He well may play. Harper! some cheerful tune
 'To soothe the impetuous spirit!—As the king
 'Uprais'd his harp, Guthrum threw wide the door
 And enter'd in, vindictive. In his eye 135
 He bore fierce wrath.

When with a tongue that hid
 All deadly plans, Hubba the chief address'd.
 'Guthrum, we long have waited, and thy zeal,
 'So boasted of, had taught us to expect 140
 'More certain proofs; but I forgot myself!
 'I did not mean to question thy high spirit,
 'As well might I suspect this heart, that now
 'Beats with one purpose.—

Tho', when late we met, 145
 'Our words were rough, while we in idle talk
 'Question'd each other's courage, and had nigh
 'Handled our swords, yet 'twas a childish thing.
 'Guthrum, to tell the truth, thou well did'st speak!
 'And since thy boyish days, thou hast been known, 150
 'To shine far better in thy deeds than words.
 'Say I not right, old chief?

Guthrum replied.
 'My plan is this. All others I respect,
 'But I have learn'd, most to respect myself; 155
 'And never to receive from lord or slave,
 'Charges, or light or heavy, but this sword
 'Hath weigh'd their truth. I am content to serve
 'Thee, my young prince, as I have wont to do,
 'With due allegiance; yet, there is within 160
 'This veteran breast, a heart that reverences
 'Its duties to another, and itself.

'I am thy friend again ; receive my hand !'
 'Most willing,' Hubba cried. 'We both are friends,'
 When, with a downcast look, yet cheerful voice, 165
 He further spake, 'We here are met, to name
 'What best may serve our cause. I need not tell
 'Thee, Guthrum ! what the customs of our land,
 'Preceding battle, and how well it suits
 'Mortals to deprecate great Odin's frown, 170
 'Ere they commence the fight. To me it seems
 'Needful to sacrifice some victim : nay.
 'And that of human kind, thus, as beseems,
 'Pleasing the gods.¹⁵⁶ What thinkest thou ? oh chief !'

Guthrum replied, 'Most wise ! some blood should flow.' 175
 'If blood must flow,' said Hubba, 'thou would'st chuse,
 'Doubtless, a victim of such sort, that gods
 'Might smile beneficent, and in our cause
 'Take more than common interest. Speak I well ?
 'Truly,' said Guthrum. Hubba thus exclaim'd : 180
 With eye that darted the malignant fire.
 'If well I speak, then, by thy patriot zeal !
 'By all the ardour in the Danish cause
 'Thou oft hast boasted ! By Valhalla's halls—
 'I claim *thy captive* !—Look not thus amazed ! 185
 'But if sincerity thy breast hath sway'd,
 'Answer me, yes !'

'No ! by the gods above !'

Cried Guthrum. 'She shall never bleed ! My word,—
 'My oath is with her, and when Guthrum fails 190
 'His promise, then shall man renounce all faith
 'And Surtur's¹⁵⁶ desolating reign draw near.'
 Whilst filled with rage, Hubba with placid mien
 Thus answer'd. 'Guthrum, thou art wise and brave—
 'This much thy foes confess. Thou wilt ere long, 195
 'Repress thy warmth, and see most plain, how right
 'To sacrifice this captive, whom to save,

'In such an hour, were folly. Mark me, friend,
 'It is a deed so right, that thy sage mind
 'Must yield, there is no choice.' 200

When Guthrum thus :

'No choice ! I tell thee, Hubba ! tho' thy voice
 'Came with a god's solemnity, and Brag¹⁵⁷
 'Pleaded thy cause ; I would regard it all,
 'As doth the king of birds the winds that roar 205
 'Around his giddy dwelling. Hear me, prince !
 'If one must bleed, as offering to our gods,
 'Let Ivar speak, and with a band of Danes,
 'Some chief shall search the country, and provide
 'Hundreds like her, to temporize with fate : 210
 'But by th' infernal powers, by this my sword,
 'By Midgar's war-delighting potentate—
 'By Odin's self ! my captive shall not die.'

Guthrum's proud speech and purpose resolute
 Added new force to Hubba's kindling ire. 215
 He cried, 'Thou cormorant of haughtiness !
 'Who gave *thee* grace before thy prince to stand
 'And say what *shall* be ? Who endued *thy* words
 'To fix the bounds of fate, and of thyself
 'Give life and death ? Thine oath—I spurn its power ! 220
 'And as the sun high over head now shines,
 'So shall thy captive perish !'

With an eye

Steady as solar beam, thus Guthrum spake.
 'Thy wrath is great, but I will answer thee, 225
 'Calm, from my conscious right, not cowardice.—
 'Tho' nurs'd in wars, and mark'd with many a scar
 'From hostile sword : tho' by thy father's side
 'I, on the Lapland mountains, met the foe,
 'Where the white smoke-frosts ¹⁵⁸ rose, and ice-pil'd crags 230
 'Shone in their sumptuous dress, our only guide
 'The blasted fir, some solitary tree,

' That here and there appear'd 'mid nature's grave.
 ' Warning the foot of hardy traveller :
 ' Tho' in these scenes, by Regner's side I fought 235
 ' And nobly conquer'd; on the tall rock's brow,
 ' Sending our feats down to posterity ¹⁶⁹
 ' In living glory, making snows my bed,
 ' And ice my pillow, whilst our swords were dyed
 ' In gallant blood, chieftains' and warriors' brave ; 240
 ' Yet thou disdainest all !—These deeds are o'er !—
 ' When, at thy sire's untimely death, I stood
 ' First in command, I look'd around and saw
 ' His youthful boys, and to protect them, swore—
 ' True fealty ! Swore I *then* in vain ? Thou know'st 245
 ' This shield hath screen'd thee ! This good arm hath sav'd
 ' Thy infant head, 'mid perils numberless,
 ' When all thy false friends fled. Since thou arriv'dst
 ' In Britain, have I sheath'd my sword, and stood,
 ' An idle gazer ? Have I not display'd 250
 ' Spirit untam'd, and in this tardy strife,
 ' Stood forth in every hour, unterrified,
 ' Where danger most appear'd ! If this be true,
 ' Such long-tried service might exalt itself,
 ' Or look at least for something like a smile 255
 ' From thee, young prince, of fair complacency !
 ' But thou hast lightly deem'd these benefits,
 ' And, with a soul unmanly, dared oppress
 ' An aged friend. Injurious chieftain, hear !
 ' Tho' old in warfare, still do I possess 260
 ' A sinewy hand that yet can grasp the sword.
 ' Hubba ! I tell thee, till my head lie low,
 ' Tho' Valhall's gods in long succession came
 ' To ask this victim—she shall never bleed !'

' Proud dotard ! ' Hubba cried, ' Take thy rash words ! 265
 ' I scorn them ! As the savage bear pursues
 ' The murd'rer of her young ones, so will I—

'Thy captive! and tho' death before me stood,
 'Press onward; such my hate of thee! But words
 'Suit not my purpose! This triumphant sword, 270
 'Shall deal her death-wound!' As he to the door
 Rush'd furious, Guthrum seiz'd, and thus exclaim'd,
 'Hubba! what word was that?'—Their swords are drawn!
 When Ivar sprang between and cried, 'Forbear!
 (Whilst at the murd'rous man the harper frown'd, 275
 Unseen, and rais'd his harp, as he would strike,
 Unconscious what he did.)

With wiser wrath,
 Each warrior sheathes his sword, when Hubba cried:
 'Wrongs upon wrongs must I for ever bear? 280
 'Shall the young Hubba blush to own his sire?'¹⁶⁰
 'Guthrum! thy blood or mine this foul offence
 'Alone shall heal! We will not thus with words
 'Fight always! But, enough, now Ivar, speak!
 'Thou art our proper leader! Now decide 285
 'Tween Hubba, and that proudest of the proud,
 'Guthrum, thy brother's foe.'—When Ivar spake:
 'To me it is portentous of all ill,
 'Cut off from succour, and about to try
 'Our might with Alfred, to behold you thus 290
 'With broils disastrous, waste those thoughts, that zeal
 'The Saxons call for. Shall we by such deeds
 'Britain subdue, and to our homes return
 'Laden with honours? Hubba, thou art rash!
 'Nor Guthrum less so. Am I leader named 295
 'To learn my weakness, and behold your words
 'Guide *me*, who, child-like, need such foreign aid?
 'I am myself alone! I heed ye not—
 'Hubba, nor Guthrum!—Ere the fight begin,
 'Tis meet some victim fall, and, right I deem, 300
 'Guthrum, thy captive!—Is there one beside,
 'A Saxon in our camp? Yea! There is one—
 'Yon crazy harper. Instant seize! His blood

'Shall stay your mutual wrath!' 'Aye! Guthrum cried.
 'Let *him* be sacrificed!—Hubba exclaim'd, 305
 'This mean inglorious harping mendicant!—
 'Nay! but thy captive suffers! I will have
 'No blood but her's She is the destin'd gift
 'From Danes to gods, and as thy brother lives,
 'So shall she die!' 310

Ivar replied "'Tis well!

'Hubba, thou speakest right. Her blood *shall* flow!'
 Guthrum then smote his breast and, looking up,
 Heard Ivar say: 'But stop! to shun myself,
 'That rashness which in you so ill I deem, 315
 'I will not now determine; when night comes,
 'Then in this tent meet all! and we will speak
 'Plain to this subject. As we then resolve,
 'So shall the deed take place, for if to death
 'We doom the captive—by our torches' light, 320
 'Forth will we lead her, and may gods receive
 'Th' appeasing blood!'

Hubba transported cried,

'This is most brave, most brotherly, most wise!
 'Ivar, thou hast my thanks! yet one word more, 325
 'Favour'd I feel, but I would still require
 'An equal favour.—Let the captive stand,
 'Here in this tent, upon th' approaching eve,
 'While we debate, so shall we mark her look,
 'And feast our eyes upon her growing terrors!' 330

'Monster, away!' th' indignant Guthrum cried.
 'Shame of thy race! blot of thy father's fame!
 'Insult a woman? Make a captive stand—
 'One whom the wars have giv'n, and view her chains, 335
 'Preparing at the forge!—The molten steel,
 'Soon to become a dagger in her heart!
 'Is thy name Hubba?'—Foaming he replied,
 With venom in his eye, of scorpion kind,

'I would consume thy spirit ! Ivar, speak, 340
'The power is thine—thou art the strength of Danes !
'Say to yon man, who fain would grasp all rule,
'And, as I soberly suspect, who now
'E'en meditates our fall—say to yon man,
'Thy captive shall be present !'—Ivar cried, 345
'Thy captive shall be present ! She shall hear
'Whilst we decide.'

When, brooding as the cloud
That leads the storm on, Guthrum left the tent,
Whom Hubba follow'd ; and as Alfred rose 350
Ivar beheld, and spake : 'Mark, simple man !
'Tho' thou dost talk so wild, yet with thy harp
'Thou play'st most sweetly, and, lest words arise
'That need thy soothing—be thou here anon !'
Which said, the harper, trembling, pass'd the door. 355

ALFRED:

BOOK XVI.

ARGUMENT.

Alfred's visit to the Danish camp, continued.—Present, Ivar, Hubba, Guthrum, the Harper.

‘WELL met!’ cried Ivar. ‘Here we all appear,
‘But, where the captive? she whose fate hath raised
‘This bitter strife.’

He scarce had said, when, lo!
Alswitha enter’d trembling, led by her,— 5
Guthrum’s fair daughter. With bewilder’d glance
Around she slowly look’d. Her heart beat hard!—
For there, disguised, stood Alfred.¹⁶¹ He beheld
And trembled; every joint relax’d; such doubts
Rush’d through him, that of all around, he seem’d 10
Dubious, if most partaking of the world
Ideal or material. In his wrath,
Hubba arose, and cried,

‘Ivar, our brother,
‘Behold the captive, Guthrum vainly strives 15
‘From death to screen; but, by the sword I wield,
‘Death shall o’ertake her, and the gods receive,
‘Before th’ approaching morn, her destin’d blood.’

The gentle Zephyr, that upon the wave

Disports himself, and o'er the rippling flood, 20
 Delighted bears some vessel, freighted rich
 With human excellence, feels not more grief
 And cutting anguish, when, with potent word,
 The Genius of the ocean, bids him haste
 To other regions, and resign his charge 25
 To the fierce North-wind, that with bellowing rage
 Soon shall assault the bark, and in the waves
 Ingulf the whole,—than Alfred felt, to think
 He govern'd not, but one, a Dane, whose soul
 Blood only charm'd. 30

Alswitha silent stood.

Feeling had left her, and her eye display'd
 The vacancy of death. When Guthrum cried ;
 (Burden'd with wrath, that thus an utterance found :)
 'Hubba! more black thy heart than night o'ercast 35
 'With hideous tempests, when no moon appears,
 'And every star, fearful, withdraws. Thy soul
 'Feeds only on revenge, and thy dark mind
 'Ever displays, like Finmark's gloomy wastes,
 'All desolate, winds or the beating rain,— 40
 'Thou hast no sun within! Thy manly front
 'But pictures some fair forest's loftiest boughs,
 'Displaying health and verdure, whilst beneath,
 'Far out of sight, 'mid noxious vapours vile,
 'Lie desolation, mildew, waste, and death! 45
 'Tho' from its monstrous and atrocious kind,
 'Few might thy motive doubt, I know the cause
 'Which makes thee Guthrum's foe! which fills thy breast
 'With venom fierce, and of no earthly kind :
 'But thou shalt strive in vain! She shall not die 50
 'To glut thy vengeance! I have vow'd, have sworn,
 'Her to protect; this tongue hath pledged itself
 'With oaths so full and of such import deep,
 'That whilst this eye can see, this sword resist,
 'Yon Captive stands secure!' 55

When Ivar spake.

'Guthrum, I know thee not! Thy words and looks!
 'So strange thy character, that I suspect
 'Some fiend of hell hath borrow'd this thy shape
 'With which to spout its fury. Know, oh man! 60
 'Ivar, not Guthrum, rules in Britain's Isle.
 'Thy haughty words befit not even *thee*,
 'Tho' old and in thy country's wars renown'd.
 'If for our common good, the gods demand
 'A victim of high blood,—where is there one, 65
 'Like her I see, so noble in her port
 'And form'd for sacrifice? Say, hast thou not,
 'Of times declared, that, from her form and mien,
 'Her language and deportment, that thou knew'st
 'Thy Captive of no common origin? ¹⁶² 70
 'These oft have been thy sayings! and to shew
 'Resentment for thy words, here do I swear,
 'By all the gods in Valhall—she shall die!'

Not paler look'd the Babylonian king,
 Belshazzar, when upon the walls he saw 75
 The finger guided by an arm unseen,
 Then look'd Alswitha.—Guthrum thus replied:
 'With thee, oh chieftain! vain it were to strive:
 'Thou hast all power! yet do I feel my wrongs
 'Hard on me! Is it this for which my life 80
 'Hath borne the battle? Have I fought from youth,
 'Even to these grey hairs, to have at last
 'One little boon denied me, and receive
 'At this unlook'd for time my full reward?
 'One thing I yet may do! These hands have now 85
 'Warr'd long enough; and from this fatal hour,
 'Sheath'd is my sword! upon the Saxon foe
 'Never to light again! The strife is o'er!
 'Now take the victim! let her blood be shed!
 'Go forth and conquer in full confidence 90

'That gods approve the deed ! One path is now
'Left for old Guthrum, and I swear—to haste
'Instant to Denmark.'

Hubba shouted, 'Haste !

'We heed thee not—thy threats or services ! 109

'We are a host ourselves !'—Ivar exclaim'd,
'Lead forth the victim ! Bring the sacred knife !
'Prepare the bowl ! and let her streaming blood
'Flow to the midnight torch !'

Alswitha heard, 100

And at the chieftain's sentence, 'Lead her forth,'

A gentle sleep her senses overcast :—

Low on the ground she sank : when Hubba sprang,
Grasping her arm resistless, and essay'd

To bear her from the tent, when Ivar cried, 105

'Withhold ! I have one question first to ask. .

'Guthrum, attend ! Became yon captive thine

'In lawful fight, or didst thou meet with her

'When peaceful, and remote from wars and strife ?'—

Guthrum faint hope received, and eager cried, 110

'By all the gods we serve, illustrious chief !

'Fighting, I found her not.¹⁶³ No fruit of war

'Was yonder captive. Her I overtook

'At early morn, when pacing quietly

'Her sober way.' 115

Ivar then knit his brow :

Conflicting thoughts seem'd labouring in his breast.

Awhile he ponder'd ; when Alswitha rose,

And gazing slowly round, spake not, yet cast

Th' accusing look, unconscious, on the chief. 120

This look awoke his wrath, which but required

The pressure of a shadow, to burst forth

Untameable—Like that still pause in air,

When the dark elements are filled with mists

And pregnant clouds, 'till through the vaulted sky 125

The thunder rattles, when the world beneath,

Half deluged, hears the dread contunder roar
 That bursts heaven's flood-gates.—Thus the chieftain cried :
 ' Woman ! thy haughty mien but ill deserves
 ' Compassion, yet, it wrings me to the heart, 130
 ' What most I hate, I fear me, I must shew.'
 When lifting up her eye, Alswitha spake :
 ' Haughty, my lord ! within this trembling breast
 ' There is no haughtiness, and if thou shew
 ' Compassion to my pleading innocence—' 135

Hubba exclaim'd, ' Compassion ! Hold thy peace !'
 When turning to the chief, he thus began.
 ' Ivar, my brother ! would'st thou rescue thus
 ' A worthless captive, and expose our heads—
 ' Thy head and mine—nay, all around our tent, 140
 ' To one o'erwhelming fate ? Recall thy words !
 ' Pronounce ! and let me seize her and lead forth
 ' To instant sacrifice.'—

Then such suspense
 Hubba and Guthrum, and the harper felt, 145
 And she, Alswitha, as that wretched crew,
 On India's despot shore, when, parch'd with thirst,
 And deep immured in dungeon horrible,—
 Their very veins starting from out their flesh,
 And, boiling, as the dark blood flow'd within ;— 150
 Then such suspense felt all around the chief,
 As Albion's sons endured, when having sent
 A second time, (night round them,) to inquire
 If still he slept, the monster ! on whose rest
 Hung their last hope of being.¹⁶⁴ 155

Ivar cried,
 ' The fatal mandate glad would I pronounce,
 ' But there is one objection that till now
 ' Struck not my mind. I cannot as I would !
 ' I have an unimaginable dread 160
 ' Of powers invisible ! Regard my words.—

'Ere to the Saxon land I urged my course,
 'As well befitted Dane, I first resolved
 'To seek the Sorc'ress. To the neighbouring shore,
 'Alone, I hasted, and upon the beach 165
 'Beheld a mariner ; aloud I cried,
 'Launch out thy bark, and bear me to the spot
 'Where dwells the Oracle,'—

'I cannot go,'

Slow he replied ; 'Behold the maddening surge ;' 170
 'When strait I slew him. Having reach'd at length
 'The fatal sister,¹⁴ down immured in earth,
 'She knew the deed, and chid me with such frowns ;
 'Call'd up such legions of infernal forms,
 'And so o'erpower'd my sight with unknown shapes, 175
 'Terrific, that I vow'd, grasping my sword,
 'When to this isle I came, never to shed
 'One drop of human blood, but what the wars
 'Gave me in lawful captives. This I swore ;
 'And I so dread *her* frown, at the still hour 180
 'Of midnight, when all darkness is around,
 'That I the oath must keep ! I have no choice !
 'That vow hath saved her. Guthrum, take thy slave !'

Quick as the panther leaps upon his prey,
 Guthrum uprose and answer'd, 'Chieftain, hail ! 185
 'Ivar, I bid thee, hail ! and now behold
 'Once more in me a friend.'—As look'd the fiend—
 Hell's monarch, when the Saviour to him cried,
 Turning in his full might and majesty,
 'Get thee behind me, Satan !'—Hubba look'd, 190
 Fierce in his wrath, and muttering half-form'd words
 Of direful import.

Guthrum him approach'd,
 And thus bespake, 'Good Hubba ! I am glad,—
 'Wherefore should'st thou be sorrowful ? Such wrath 195
 'As thou indulgest ill befits a prince,

' And such determin'd vengeance. Thou hast shewn,
 ' Till now, respect for women, and the hate
 ' Thou bearest one so gentle and so good,
 ' Afflicts my spirit. I am old and grey, 200
 ' But I remember once, my heart, like thine !
 ' For as the withy throve where water was,
 ' So I, 'mid strife ; yet tho' I know myself,
 ' That hour is past. I now with cooler mind
 ' Can judge our state, and for the common cause 205
 ' Make something like concession.—These my words.
 ' When first about the fleet our swords were drawn,
 ' Where was the cause of strife ? for thee or me ?
 ' I fear'd not, thou the same ; we both alike
 ' Fear'd neither one the other : wherefore then 210
 ' That passion and this agony of rage ?
 ' I am content to own thee still my friend,
 ' If Hubba thus the same of Guthrum says.
 ' This is no time for jarring ! we must join—
 ' Speak I not, Ivar, right ? both hand and heart, 215
 ' To meet these Saxons, and that first of men,
 ' For courage, constancy, and deep designs—
 ' Alfred, their king.'

Ivar exclaim'd, ' Right well !

' Brother, thy hand ! Receive our father's friend ! 220
 ' E'en him, who in th' excess of vigilance,
 ' Hath till this hour, when danger roamed abroad,
 ' Slept less than Heimdal,¹⁶⁵ guardian of heaven's way.
 Hubba uprose, and with feign'd fellowship,
 Clasp'd Guthrum's hand in silence, looking stern, 225
 As tho' he brooded o'er revenge, not ripe,
 Rankling within. When Ivar thus again.
 ' To see you friends, once more, my spirit cheers.
 ' When the full time is past of solemn rites,
 ' Forth will we march to seek where hides the king, 230
 ' The exiled Alfred, whom our swords shall meet,
 ' Our wrath o'erwhelm ! But now for merriment.

‘Harper, thy song! and let our lighten’d hearts
 ‘Dance to the laughing instrument.’ The king
 Trembling uprose, and, singing, struck the harp. 235

‘Danes, far renown’d o’er all the north, and known
 ‘To every wave of ocean—like the pine,
 ‘Torn from the mountain’s base, that rides secure
 ‘Upon the foaming billow; hear my song!—
 ‘Friendship is dear to man, the hour of strife 240
 ‘Bitter as wormwood to the heart that feels
 ‘And prizes friendship. I to nobler themes
 ‘Now tune my harp: I sing celestial Love!
 ‘Where’er thou art, best friend of humankind,
 ‘There is all good, all harmony; the heart 245
 ‘That truly loves, a mail’d defence doth wear
 ‘That blunts all sorrow. Let each soul be true,
 ‘Of all that round me listen, to the vows
 ‘Preferred in happier times, and patient look
 ‘For future recompence. Such is the worth 250
 ‘Of heaven-descended Love, that nothing here,
 ‘E’en in the spacious world, hath magnitude
 ‘By which to tell its value! Pearls and crowns
 ‘Are fleeting shadows, but affection true,
 ‘Constant and spotless, scorning time and place, 255
 ‘Lives and for ever lives, for ’tis the gift—
 ‘First and most precious, heaven ordains to man.
 ‘The ocean, that with raving mounts on high,
 ‘And seems ordain’d through endless years to roll,
 ‘For ever troubled, soon shall stay his wrath. 260
 ‘Oh ye, whose hearts affection calls her own,
 ‘Heed not your sorrows! soon the storm shall cease,
 ‘Like ocean in his fury.’

Ivar cried:

‘Thy minstrelsy, so sweet, makes glad my heart. 265
 ‘Where learned’st thou thy song? Did’st ever tread
 ‘On distant Denmark, for it seems the same

' Which I in mournful mood to Freda¹⁰⁶ spake
 ' Ere I came hither.' Hubba thus replied,
 ' And I to Thoris.' Wildly cried the king, 270
 ' I ride upon the winds, or 'tween the waves,
 ' And mid the howling storm, recline myself,
 ' As all were quiet. Have ye never heard
 ' 'Mid forests deep the night-owl whoop to me ;
 ' Or, from your native mountains seen on high 275
 ' The eagle sailing, whilst he heard afar,
 ' Check'd in his course, my harp in solitude ?'
 ' Methinks I have,' cried Hubba, tremblingly,
 When slowly thus to Ivar he began.
 ' This fearful and most questionable thing, 280
 ' For whether man or not, I would not say,
 ' Cheats me of reason. Ivar ! bid him haste
 ' From this our presence, for I half suspect
 ' Nay, I could swear by his long eye-lash black,
 ' 'Tis Lok himself, that evil Deity 285
 ' Whom gods and men abhor. He hath great power.
 ' So we must treat him kindly.'

Ivar look'd

In dubious mood, 'twixt doubt and certainty,
 And thus replied. ' Hubba, I may not think 290
 ' Yon harper, Lok ? No, no ! it cannot be !
 ' Thy brain is wandering. He is what he seems,
 ' A crazy harper, whom some sore mishap
 ' Hath lighted on, and his distemper'd brain
 ' Serv'd as we witness.' Turning, thus the chief : 295
 ' Thy harp, young harper, thou hast learn'd to touch,
 ' With a bewitching tenderness ; thy voice,
 ' Form'd for thine instrument, hath to our minds
 ' Call'd up sweet images, so clear and sweet,
 ' That truly I could wish this warfare o'er, 300
 ' That I might back to Denmark and exchange
 ' The shadow for the substance : but, vain thoughts !
 ' This is no time for love's soft witcheries.

' Now we are friends, let us with speed prepare
 ' To meet the fight, for as the husbandman 305
 ' Tills ere he reaps and houses, so must we
 ' First sow the seed in war ; Alfred first meet.
 ' But yet before we part, one other song
 ' Methinks might cheer us. Woman, take the harp !
 ' And let us hear if thou hast learn'd to touch 310
 ' Soft notes like him thy country-man.'

The Queen—

Receiving from her stranger lord, the harp,
 Falt'ring thus spake.—' Faint is my voice, and harsh,
 ' And feebly do I touch the minstrel chord, 315
 ' Yet will I sing thy praise, O, chieftain, thine—
 ' Who gav'st me life, and at this hour command'st
 ' My harp to speak. Sweet is the harshest song
 ' That springs from gratitude, and I will strike
 ' The harp, albeit discordant.—Know, my lord 320
 ' One song alone is mine ; 'tis of a maid
 ' Who on the wide seas saw her lover go,
 ' And, wand'ring on the beach, to every wind
 ' That waved her tresses, sang my humble song.
 ' If thou would'st hear it, speak, and I obey.' 325
 He cried, ' Play on ! ' When, trembling, she began.

' Beloved, go ! go o'er the briny sea,
 ' And angels guard thee ! When thou liest down,
 ' May sometimes my soft image hover near.—
 ' Forget not her who still remembers thee ! 330
 ' Go youth, belov'd ! go to thy distant home !
 ' Or never more shall I behold thee ! Go !
 ' Before the billows swallow thee. The rocks—
 ' In fatal ambush lie. Oh, think of me !
 ' And if my life could screen thee from the storm, 335
 ' Then were thy dangers o'er. Go, gentle youth !
 ' Soul of my soul, and may the winds and waves
 ' Pity my sorrows ; may they guide thee back

'To meet me, oh, beloved! may they shew
 'Compassion for the tears I hourly shed. 340
 'But if the destinies, beloved youth!
 'Should keep thee from my bosom, if the wars
 'Or stormy main should stop thee—still believe
 'That in my dreams by night, my thoughts by day,
 'Thou art the sov'reign lord; no rival there. 345
 'How cam'st thou where thou art? Behold thy state,
 'Fly back, beloved! Dread thy mighty foes!
 'For death is near thee! Trust not thou to chance
 'Thy precious being! Instant, flee away!
 'But tho' thou long should'st lose me, thou shalt find 350
 'If e'er thou see me more, my love the same,
 'My heart still pure; and if, far off, I die,
 'Oh! weep for one who with her latest breath
 'Call'd on her true-love, and from heaven implored
 'Blessings on him and his.' 355

She ceas'd the song.

Ivar uprose, and said, 'Now may we part.'
 When to the tent there came a spy, return'd
 From wanderings far. Him Ivar saw, and cried;
 'Say! hast thou heard of Alfred, or what force 360
 'Saxons now boast?'—

'I know it all,' he cried,
 'I have seen Alfred, and beheld the spot
 'Where now he is, where all the Saxons dwell;
 'I know their haunts, their numbers, their designs, 365
 'All! all is mine!' With the spontaneous voice
 'Each chief replied, 'Declare it! Tell thy tale,'—
 When thus he spake, turning to Alfred nigh.—
 'What doth this harping man do here? I late
 'From yonder hill, beheld him on our camp, 370
 'Gazing with curious eye.' Hubba exclaim'd,
 'Hold thy peace, *Dane!* Thy tale!' He thus began:

'We left you, mighty princes! to find out

- ' Where Oddune fled, and where the Saxon king—
 ' Alfred, conceal'd himself. We thought it well, 375
 ' Singly to journey. Thus, of all our band,
 ' Each took a different route. † By night I roam'd :
 ' By day, my habitations were the woods.
 ' Oft weary was my spirit. I have lain,
 ' Upon the tall branch swinging, seeing naught 380
 ' 'Mid the thick leaves, and as the eve drew near,
 ' Crept to the utmost verge to gaze around
 ' For path-way, or the next o'er-shadowing wood
 ' Myself to hide. Long were it now to say
 ' My hourly perils, or how dull to stride 385
 ' Some giant limb, and scarce a living thing,
 ' Through the long hours, behold, save overhead,
 ' The squirrel that at leisure rasp'd his nuts
 ' And dropp'd them on me.' ¹⁸⁷—
 Cried th' indignant chief, 390
 ' Withhold thy babblings! What are these to us?—
 ' Stars! trees! and squirrels! Tell us of the king
 ' Who plots our ruin, nor again provoke
 ' Ivar's fierce wrath!
 ' Pardon me!' cried the Dane; 395
 (Knowing that death was mingled with that frown)
 ' I would forget the rest, and speak alone
 ' What thou requirest.—When the night arrived,
 ' Descending from my hiding place, I sought
 ' For cottage, or some solitary hind, 400
 ' Whom I might question. Long I sought in vain;
 ' When I o'ertook a man, and bade him tell
 ' Where Alfred was.' He cried, ' I know not, Dane!
 ' And if I did, think'st thou, that thou should'st hear?'
 ' I answer'd not, but clave him to the ground. 405
 ' Then, marching on, I saw a cottager,
 ' And as he cast his eye, by the pale moon,
 ' And glimps'd me, fast he sped; I follow'd hard,
 ' When seeing him upraise his staff, my sword

- ' Gave to the thirsty earth the Saxon's blood. 410
 ' Through a dark wood, now far I roam'd, so vast,
 ' That like the sea, illimitable, round—
 ' It seem'd to spread. When by a clear brook's side,
 ' I saw another cottage. At the door
 ' I knock'd; none answer'd me; I knock'd again; 415
 ' When, wistless who it was, an old man came,
 ' Asking my purpose. Close behind him stood
 ' His aged wife: earnest they both look'd up,
 ' And, undismay'd, inquired again the cause
 ' That brought me hither. Thus I answer'd them: 420
 ' Vain to oppose me! Instant say, old man!
 ' Where Alfred is!' This was his answer, 'Friend,
 ' I know not.' 'Nay, but, on thy life, old man!
 ' Say where thy monarch! Fail not to declare.
 ' Or death be thine! When holding up my sword,' 425
 ' Stay!' he exclaim'd. 'I am an aged man,¹⁰⁸
 ' And many a *long* year in this woody vale.
 ' By the clear brook that babbles by my side,
 ' Thro' summer and thro' winter, I have dwelt.'
 ' But answer me! I spake. Where is thy king?' 430
 ' Oh, stay thy hand!' he cried, 'I pray thee stay!
 ' I cannot tell—I never harm have done—
 ' Spare my grey hairs!'—
 ' Vain is it thus to talk,
 ' I answer'd, and that instant drove my sword, 435
 ' Deep in his heart, when loud the woman cried,
 ' Forbear!' 'I answer'd not, but with my sword
 ' For ever closed her eyes. Truly I felt,
 ' At the first thought of killing them, a dread—
 ' A check, a slow recoiling of the mind; 440
 ' But then the thought, that they were Saxons, rose,
 ' And pity I had none.
 ' Now, earnest still,
 ' Far through the wood I wander'd, and again,
 ' As was my custom, climb'd some lofty tree 445

'To meet the day : when, to my wond'ring eyes,
 'Appear'd a castle, 'mid the thickest wood,
 'And near, the Saxon army !—There they are !—
 'Upon the loftiest walls, whilst the morn lagg'd,
 'I saw a man, so active 'bove his peers, 450
 'And with command so regal, that I thought,
 'Nay, I aver, it was the Saxon king.
 'I still look'd round, and, as the morn advanced,
 'Beheld the castle clearer ; when I fled, }
 'Seeking thee here. By my good prince's grace 455
 'True is my story.'—

'Bravely hast thou said,'
 Cried Ivar. 'Now the certain day draws near—
 'The hour of vengeance ! Alfred, thou art *there* !
 'But, ere another moon, low in the dust 500
 'Thy head shall lie. Hubba, regard my words !
 'And Guthrum, mark me ! When the hour hath pass'd
 'That bounds our revelry, and the full time
 'Appointed to our gods—five days from this—
 'Forth will we seek that forest, and consign 505
 'To black perdition—Alfred and his host.'

All shouted, 'Speed the time !' and forth withdrew.

A L F R E D :

BOOK XVII.

ARGUMENT.

Alfred on his return to Selwood Forest, meets Sigbert—Sends him to the cottage at Ethelney—Joins his troops—Marches to fight the Danes—Meets the enemy—Oddune dispatched to them with a summons—Preparation for Battle.

'Twas midnight, when, the Danish conference o'er,
Each left the hall. Alfred his harp unstrung,
Moving in thoughtless attitude, then stood,
Earnest to catch one glance of her he loved,—
Led from the conference fierce. He saw her pass, 5
Arm link'd in arm, with her, the faithful friend,
Guthrum's mild daughter. On the ground she pored
Disconsolate. Alfred beheld, nor moved,—
Fill'd with distracting thoughts, till every ray
That lit her footsteps, faded. Now the thought 10
Leagued with despair, opprest him, for all hope
Vanish'd, that he might rescue her he lov'd.
From withering dreams arous'd, he now revolved
On perils that his own path throug'd. The wind
Howl'd thro' the air, and every blast that blew 15
Seem'd on his heart to strike, and bleaker make
The dreary scene around him. Doubts now rose—
Whether the lurking danger might not still

Arrest his footsteps. Gloom pervades his brow ;
 When, stout of heart, he hastening thro' the camp, 20
 Drew near a centinel.—' What step is that ?'
 With up-raised battle-axe, the warrior cried.
 The king absorb'd with his wild phantasies,
 Heeded him not, but looking at the clouds,
 Muttering, approach'd.—The centinel exclaim'd, 25
 ' By my good spear, the harper ! Wherefore man !
 ' Cam'st thou this way, whilst the winds roar so loud,
 ' That every living thing, at such an hour,
 ' Shelter methinks might seek ?' Alfred replied ;
 ' I feed the porpoise ! Hark, her young ones cry ! 30
 ' I must away !' When swiftly he pass'd on,
 And as he pass'd, the Dane in pity cried,
 ' Poor frantic man, safe be thy wanderings wild !'

When Alfred now the hostile camp had 'scaped,
 Tho' joyful, he perceived a secret chill 35
 Creep thro' him, for the stormy night was dark
 And now (with danger o'er) his perils rose,
 Appalling, with a force and vehemence,
 Transcending the reality. His heart,—
 (Roaming so late upon the verge of death) 40
 He rais'd with gratitude, to Him, whose power—
 All worlds controlling, o'er his servants oft,
 As in this hour, casts his protecting shield.
 Whilst musing thus, slow, from her watery bed,
 With timid ray, the horned moon uprose, 45
 And from her calming influence, seem'd to say
 To all the elements ' Like me be still.'
 The king her pale beams joyfully beheld,
 And sped toward Selwood ; doubting every sound,
 The foe pursuing, whilst each branchless tree 50
 Seem'd lurking Dane.

Now to the wood he came—
 The wood where dwelt the well known cottager ;

He who the harp had lent,—whose benediction
 In solitude had cheer'd, and whom to see 55
 Gave to his feet fresh buoyancy, and made
 All perils past, seem light. Still on he sped,
 And, in imagination, ere he reach'd
 That tranquil and soul-soothing dwelling-place,
 The hearty greet exchanges. There, his *Garb* 60
 Late had he left, once more to be resumed.
 And there, reluctant, but in confidence,
 His *sword* the woodman's trusty hand received,
 Now needed for new conflicts.—Journeying on,—
 More pleasant each familiar sight appear'd. 65
 The very trees look'd greener, and the birds,
 With sweeter notes gave forth their minstrelsy.

The interview fast hastens, the delight,
 When, after absence, friends rejoicing meet ;
 Sweeter for perils past. Eager of heart, 70
 Alfred, the cold *and intermediate* spurns.
 For sight he waits not. He already sees,
 In fancy's revelations, clear and bright,
 Old age, impatient, rising from his seat
 To give the greeting—joyance in his eyes— 75
 Four-fold augmented, by the harp's sweet sight,
 The precious relic of a son no more !

The long-look'd hour is come ! The cot he sees !
 With ardent step he hastens to the door !
 He knocks ! assured that, at the second breath, 80
 The latch will move, and gratulations loud
 Welcome him back.—No voice—no sound is heard !
 He louder knocks !—yet silence still prevails !
 His heart misgives !—Slowly he opes the door.
 He enters—looks around.—Sudden he starts !— 85
 What cold and creeping dew-damp, o'er his brow,
 Starts from each pore !—when, on the ground he sees—

Dread spectacle !—the friendly woodman old—
 Murder'd !—and by his side, a lifeless corpse—
 His aged wife ! 90

It was a withering sight !

Alfred stands motionless !—His breast heaved hard.
 His eye a mist pervaded, when he cried,
 (Glancing at that disastrous *Dane*, whose spoil
 He heard recounted) ' Monster ! thou hast slain 95

' A time-worn, and most unoffending pair !
 ' God pardon thee !' After a silence brief,
 The king breath'd forth,—in accents slow and faint,
 (Lest utterance, lawless feeling, should o'erpower)
 ' He was a man, in worth and virtue's sight 100

' Not vast in intellect, (so often proved,
 ' A curse to its possessor !)—better far !—
 ' Rich, sound in the *interior*. Warm within.
 ' In this inhospitable world of ours—
 ' Bless'd with a heart of kindest sympathies. 105

' I weep for thee, old man !—A sample rare
 ' Of human nature in its choicest form—
 ' Cleans'd, purified, by influence from on high !'
 The king oppress'd with anguish, smites his breast,
 And as a statue stands, absorbed in thought !— 110
 The shuddering frame, the palpitating heart,
 The trembling knee, tell of the strife he bore.

When thought had now return'd, and reason free,
 Slow to himself, in tremulous tones he cried.
 ' I will not leave you, miserable friends ! 115

' The decent earth shall cover you. These hands
 ' Your grave shall delve,—under yon spreading tree,
 ' Where you so oft have sat, and to high heaven,
 ' Your orisons both night and morning paid,
 ' All nature smiling !—emblem of the peace 120
 ' That in your purged and righteous spirits reign'd !
 ' You, half I envy. From this barren world,
 ' This congregated mass of wretchedness !

' Where worth, like some exotic and rare plant,
 ' Pining, endures the uncongenial soil, 125
 ' And wrong and violence hold revelry !—
 ' Call'd suddenly away !—not unprepared ;—
 ' A moment's pang exchanged for endless joy !'

Slow gazing round, a welcome spade he spied.
 He seizes it, and now beneath the tree, 130
 The grave is form'd. The sufferers slow he bears
 To their last resting-place, and earth to earth—
 Commits them, in no idle pomp of woe,
 But with the unbought tear, and leaves them there,
 In faith, in silence, and in sanctity !— 135
 For precious is the spot where virtue sleeps.

Now, duties solemn rouse him from his trance.
 His vest he seeks, his sword. With curious eye,
 Now here, now there, he searches ; long in vain.
 Ah ! there they are !—in that sequester'd nook ; 140
 Up where the dry herbs hang, placed carefully.

Once more the melancholy glance he casts—
 O'er the sad scene !—where cheerfulness so late
 Reign'd paramount, and hospitality—
 Welcom'd the stranger. Now the wicker chairs 145
 Stand empty, (where the aged pair once sat,
 Contentment round, and read, with thankful hearts,
 From their few precious pages, of that book
 Which told of an hereafter,) now no more
 To greet their owners !—Cold the hearth-stone lies !— 150
 The ashes scatter'd, and the half-burnt boughs
 Resting, and still to rest in quietness—
 Tipp'd with their heads of grey ! Once more he sigh'd,
 Sad at his heart, then slowly pass'd the door.

While hast'ning toward his followers, Alfred sees 155

Far thro' the trees—that melancholy man—
 Sigbert, with solemn step, the woods among,
 Restless as wandering Jew!¹⁶⁰ Sigbert perceived
 Alfred, and rush'd to meet him. Thus he cried,
 'My long-lost prince! my master! have I found 160
 'Thee, Alfred! oh my king? Thy fearful frown
 'At any other moment I might shun,
 'Yet now I heed it not, to see again
 'My long-lost lord.'—Alfred remember'd well
 His former anger, but, the sudden joy 165
 From certainty that he was yet a king,
 So fill'd his mind, that he forgot the past,
 And, wistless what he said, cried, 'Peace be thine!'
 Sigbert then spake: 'My master, pardon me!
 'And with my weakness bear a little space, 170
 'That I may tell my grief. To name the pain
 'This breast hath felt, since thou didst bid me go
 'An outcast and a murd'rer, I would fain
 'But cannot. Oh, my king, this heart is sad!
 'I, from a guilty conscience have endured 175
 'Anguish so terrible and past the power
 'Of words to tell, that how a heart should bear
 'A load so vast, I knew not till this hour.
 'Pardon me, monarch!'—

Thus the king replied: 180

'Sigbert, remember, I am man, not God!
 'He must the deed forgive!'—When Sigbert thus:
 'Most truly! and, by wrestling fervently,
 'His ear hath heard my prayer; and I have faith
 'Thro' Him who is the sinner's Advocate, 185
 'That pardon'd in the Almighty's eye I stand.
 'Do thou forgive me!'—

Alfred mildly cried,

'I chid thee but to teach how harder far
 'To bear Heaven's chiding. Now thy mind is chang'd, 190
 'And thou dost see how mutable the man

'Who on himself doth rest, when the hour comes
'Of sore temptation. I am yet thy friend.'

The drowning man who spies approaching aid,
Feels not more joy than Sigbert. Thus he cried : 195
'Monarch, my heart is thine ! but to my words
'Thou must not look for recompence. Declare,
'Oh king ! how I may shew my gratitude,
'And if I shew it not, trust not in man !
'His vow is vain.'—Alfred replied : 'My time 200
'Important duties claim, but I will stay,
'Albeit unwise, one moment to bestow
'A passing word, with meek austerity.

'Ask of the world's great Author, to subdue
'All evil in thy heart, but chiefly, wrath— 205
'The source of ills unnumber'd, which, around,
'Spreads direful burdens—making hell of earth,
'And fiends of men. Sigbert ! remember thou—
'This shadowy world, this transient state of being,
'But ill deserves of man, the sacrifice 210
'Anger demands. What is there here on earth
'Deserving passion ? what below the sky
'Worthy a creature's wrath ? Few are our days,
'And all our little evils, sent to cleanse
'Minds wayward, and our faculties, from dross, 215
'Debasing, and unworthy that high name—
'The sons of God. Precious to Heaven is he,
'Who sees, in mortal things, their real worth,
'And looks beyond them ! Here on earth we sow,
'After, we reap the fruit. The race is here, 220
'The prize hereafter. Here the ocean raves,
'There is our haven. And that man shall find,
'Who thro' this howling wilderness preserves
'Spotless his mind, and in a tainted world
'Holds converse with his Maker ; sees how great 225

' The worth of holiness, and truly knows
 ' How to respect himself, and to preserve
 ' God's temple pure, still trusting in His name,
 ' Our only righteousness ! *that man shall find*
 ' Life's evils fleeting, and his mind prepared 230
 ' For the fruit, full, unspeakable,
 ' Of death reserved above.—

' Be these thy thoughts,
 ' Oh Sigbert ! and when wrath o'ertakes thee, wrongs
 ' Stop thee to hear their tale ; gird up thy mind, 235
 ' And like the sojourner, whose home is Heaven,
 ' Small things endure unruffled. Thou hast slain
 ' A pleading man !—Albeit an enemy,
 ' Yet still a man. I would forget the deed,
 ' For in thy countenance, methinks I see 240
 ' Contrition ; that—to God ! and for thy kind
 ' And many services, I hold thee dear.'

Sigbert essay'd to speak.—Alfred again :

' As once I told thee, now I tell the same—
 ' Thou shalt not war ! Profession thou hast made 245
 ' Of holiness and of devoted heart
 ' To holy ways—flee then th' avenging sword !
 ' If wars must come—if human blood must flow—
 ' Let those who never bore the prophet's name
 ' Stand forth and combat ! but the God we serve, 250
 ' In most peculiar way, his ministers
 ' Requires to dwell in peace.'—Sigbert replied ;
 ' As the tall hill catches the sun's last beam,
 ' When all beside is twilight, so may I,
 ' When death draws near, oh king, remember thee, 255
 ' And these thy words ! My heart indeed is fill'd
 ' With lasting gratitude. Thy mild rebuke,
 ' On this my mind, flashes conviction's light,
 ' And for thy precepts, I am nearer heaven.'

Alfred thus spoke : ' Sigbert ! my words attend. 260
 ' Haste thou to Ethelney—that humble cot
 ' Where late thou saw'st me ; there abides my son
 ' Whom thou discover'dst on the bleak down wide,
 ' And thither broughtest. There direct thy course,
 ' And guard him with such constancy of care 265
 ' As I would fain bestow. One moment more,
 ' I must address thee. Now are these my steps
 ' Verging toward that decisive hour, when sword
 ' Must clash with sword, and every Saxon strive
 ' For life and liberty, with each delight 270
 ' Man values. Doubtful the event ! Thy king
 ' May not survive it ! I have one request—
 ' Sigbert, preserve my child ! If I should fall,
 ' Keep him secure ! and, if in after times,
 ' Saxons should think of me, and heav'n have crown'd 275
 ' Their brave endeavours ; lead him to their camp !
 ' Say to th' assembled armies, view the child
 ' Whose sire was Alfred ! Own him as your prince !
 ' A better fortune shall support his arms,
 ' And he shall do what Alfred would have done !' 280

Cried Sigbert, ' Oh my king ! thou must not die.
 ' I had almost with impious zeal declared
 ' Thou shalt not die ! Thou art our earthly trust !—
 ' Might I, unblam'd, disturb the sanctity
 ' Of thy repose, and ask one question more,— 285
 ' What of our gracious queen ?' At Sigbert's words,
 Alfred his forehead clasp'd, a sudden chill
 Rush'd thro' his frame, when, feebly he replied,
 ' Name it no more ! I must not answer thee !
 ' Angels of God, defend her ! me preserve, 290
 ' Father Almighty !—Sigbert ! I am now
 ' Bound to the castle, and these moments few
 ' Ill can I spare. Depart thou on thy way !'
 When Sigbert cried, ' Farewell !' and both retired.

As thro' the intertwin'd and darken'd path 295
 Alfred proceeded, mid' a thicket near
 He spied a wolf! His eyes were visible,
 While yet his form was hid;—glaring with wrath!
 And as the king uprais'd his sword, the beast
 Disclosed his fang, and with a horrid snarl 300
 Darted to meet his prey. The monarch stood
 Unmoved! The wolf look'd up, yet fear'd to leap!
 Foam issued from his jaw! a stream of light
 From either orb appear'd, and every hair,
 Bristling, declared his fury. Brief the pause! 305
 He springs voracious. Alfred stretch'd his arm,
 And, with a sudden aim, seized his huge throat,
 And whilst the monster coil'd, gasping for breath,
 Deep in his heart, plunged the impetuous sword.

While Alfred roam'd, disguised, and fearlessly, 310
 Thro' all the camp, where death and danger reign'd,
 To Selwood's shades, full many a patriot chief,
 And gallant band,—Wessex' stout-hearted sons,
 Sped resolute, presenting to the eye—
 A host, by zeal inspired, that promise gave— 315
 With strength resistless, by one effort grand—
 To meet, and to instruct the haughty Dane,
 How terrible a people—roused to arms.

Now to the castle walls the king draws near.
 The Saxons see, and rush to meet their prince; 320
 Wild with excess of joy! When Alfred cried:—
 (Exulting to behold so vast a host)
 'Friends! warriors! hope of Britons yet unborn!
 'I read in every countenance the joy
 'My presence yields you. Viewing, as I do, 325
 'You, patriot hosts! You, Saxons! crowding round
 'Your country's banner, and the prince, who lives
 'To do you good, my heart intenser love
 'Feels for you, than it ever yet hath felt.

- ' You are my children ! I, your father am ! 330
 ' Important are the scenes by me beheld,
 ' Since last we met. I, 'mid the Danish camp,
 ' Have wander'd unmolested, on my back
 ' A harp I bore ; I have survey'd their force,
 ' Obtain'd their plans, and now again am here 335
 ' To tell you my designs. The hour is come !
 ' Prepare for battle ! In the Danish camp,
 ' I stood and heard a spy instruct his chief,
 ' He knew our haunts ! He knew the very spot,
 ' Selwood he named, where all our forces lay, 340
 ' With me, your monarch. In their savage rites
 ' Five days they vow'd to spend. If we advance
 ' Fast to the combat, these our swords may bear
 ' Destruction unawares. Yet, ere the fight,
 ' Regard your monarch.—At this solemn hour 345
 ' When all we have hangs on the quivering beam,
 ' When Denmark's demons hover round, and Time
 ' Prepares his hand to write the record dread,
 ' Alfred is vanquish'd, or, the rapturous truth
 ' Saxons have triumph'd, and the Danes been taught— 350
 ' Lesson severe ; how irresistible
 ' The swords of freemen, when, with arms like ours—
 ' They bravely strive for all that life holds dear.
 ' Firm in our native strength, we, foreign aid,
 ' Well may despise. With scorn may we behold— 355
 ' Our base betrayers. Think, O, valorous men !
 ' Where now is Mercia ?—Where Northumbria's host ?
 ' Where the stout men of Kent ? so free to vow !
 ' So backward to perform ! And, at this hour,
 ' Where are the Anglians ?—Men of words, not deeds ! 360
 ' These promised us, with all their wonted pledge
 ' Of base hypocrisy, to swell our ranks
 ' With countless heroes :—where do they appear ?
 ' I see them not ! yet, Oh, transporting thought !
 ' I see a nobler sight. I see my friends !— 365

'Wessex' brave sons, my subjects, now resolved
 'To vindicate their rights, to meet the foe,
 'And shine resplendent in the rolls of fame.
 'With joy transporting, now do I behold,
 'The British lion roused, shaking his mane 370
 'In fierce defiance! Let the traitors flee!
 'We need them not! we fear no giant foes,—
 'Pigmies to courage! In our native strength,
 'We, like a forest to the howling blast,
 'Will laugh at their assaults, and whilst we march 375
 'To give, or to receive the final blow,
 'Our trust, our song shall be,—'God, and our rights!'
 'Wessex, ere long, shall face the haughty Dane!'

Amid th' exultant shout, all hearts alike,
 With sword and dart, panted to meet the foe!— 380
 Chiding old Time, so tardily evolved—
 That stay'd the fight. They trusted in one field,
 Conspicuous, sacred;—one illustrious field!
 To furnish for th' historic annalist
 Feats, grand and marvellous, such, that their sons, 385
 Glowing with pride, and hanging on the tale—
 Where valour swept the foe-men from their land,
 Might cry exultant, while the big heart heaved,
 'These were my ancestors!'

Eve hastens now. 390
 Down in the west, with gorgeous clouds array'd,
 The orb of day, majestic, slow retires,
 O'ercanopied by the effulgence wide,—
 Burd'ning the concave; cloud high-heap'd on cloud,
 Sapphire and gold, still changing momentarily, 395
 Yet lovelier for the change!—Now heaven resigns
 Her fast-retiring splendors. Gathering clouds
 Purple and grey, still deep'ning, fill the air,
 Till o'er the earth, and all th' ethereal depths,
 Darkness, unbroken, spreads her ebon pall. 400

Revolving on the scenes, unfolding near,
 Alfred tho' sleepless, seeks his lonely couch.
 A stillness mark'd the air, like that dread pause
 That o'er the Carribean, oft precedes
 Th' impetuous hurricane. Now night has waned. 405
 With serious brow, the king, revolving, sees,—
 Far into future times ;—remembering well
 Its charter, and complexion will depend
 Upon the coming strife. With Saxon might,—
 Aroused to rage and terrible resolve, 410
 He dares to hope for triumph, yet, a voice
 Whispers within,—‘ Uncertainty is stamp'd
 ‘ On all things here,—and if thy arms should fail !
 ‘ Then what a surge of terrors will o'erwhelm
 ‘ Britain and Saxons !’—Conflict reigns within ; 415
 Till fancy, busier for the silence, roams,
 Constraint disdaining, o'er the wide expanse—
 Wrapping the future.—Dreary scenes arise !
 Others sustain the drooping spirit, clad
 In rain-bow hues,—each, fleeting as the sun-beams 420
 That on the ruffled fountain sportive play.
 Leading such bands, with hearts so resolute,
 He might not doubt the issue, but the process !—
 There lies the stress. Gazing with anxious brow,
 He feels the burden of uncertainty, 425
 Till, with the good man's last resort, he cries,—
 ‘ Ye shadows of the night that haunt my soul—
 ‘ In other breasts seek refuge ! From this hour,
 ‘ Mine be the tranquil confidence.—*He* reigns !
 ‘ Sov'reign supreme !—the Lord Omnipotent ! 430
 ‘ And in His arm I trust.’—A calm prevails,
 When, gently, sleep his weary eye-lids closed
 And pleasant were the visions of the night.

Impatient of the morn, before the dawn—
 Gave her first kindling blush, the king arose, 435

When wondering he beheld his gallant troops—
 E'en then, the dews of night upon their helm,
 Marshall'd in fair array. 'At such a time,
 'I would not be the latest,' he exclaim'd :
 'I bid you hail!'—He further strove to speak, 440
 But, 'mid the shouts, no more his voice was heard
 Than is the pine's upon the mountain top,
 When with the blast it swings, to some remote,
 And gazing traveller. The tumult ceased :
 When thus the king. 445
 ' Brave subjects, hope is ours !
 'The strife is near ! We haste to meet the foe !
 'Deeds, and not words, become this solemn hour !
 Their swords they draw, impatient of the fight,—
 Where one must sink in death, Saxon or Dane ! 450

After long toil, with looks of secret joy,
 Or bitter,—like the hypocrite's in sleep—
 As hopes or fears prevail'd, they mount a hill,
 When every Saxon stopped,—sudden, like one—
 Who meets a precipice, for, through the vale, 455
 Before them, march'd the Danes ! And they too stopp'd,
 Half terrified at this unlook'd-for sight,
 Saxons in arms !—Instant the Danes draw back,
 (To a near hill, where a proud castle rose)
 As tho' they fear'd the fight. The subterfuge 460
 Alfred beheld, and check'd his troops, who sought
 Boldly to follow.

Now they reach'd the hill—
 The Danes, when both th' opposing armies stand
 Wafting their mutual threats, like two huge mounts, 465
 Neighbouring, around whose heads, the white mists sail,
 And ever when th' aerial currents change,
 From each to each, mov'd by fierce jealousy,
 Their cloud artillery send. Alfred thus spake.
 'Subjects, behold the Danes ! View yonder host, 470

‘ And in them see the **spoilers** of your homes,
 ‘ The **murd’ers** of your children and your sires,
 ‘ The foes of peace, the wasters of the earth !
 ‘ Now are your hearts your own !’ All clash their shields.

‘ I will not bid my subjects bleed,’ he cried, 475
 ‘ But of necessity. Oddune, approach !’
 The chief drew near. Him Alfred thus address’d.
 ‘ To me it seems expedient to dismiss
 ‘ Some messenger, of bold and manly port,
 ‘ To yonder Danes, bidding them leave this land.’ 480
 Oddune replied, ‘ Let me that herald be !’
 ‘ Go ’ said the king, ‘ thus to the Danes declare :
 ‘ Ye wasting men, to Denmark’s savage shore,
 ‘ Swift as the eagle, flee, or by our swords
 ‘ Soon shall ye fall, all fall ! Say, wherefore come 485
 ‘ To scourge our land, to waste this happy isle,
 ‘ To wrong this people ? whom your swords may slay,
 ‘ But ne’er shall conquer—while yon sun remains,
 ‘ Or earth endures. Alfred, our king, hath sent
 ‘ Me to forewarn you. Instant on the ground 490
 ‘ Cast ye your arms, and swear by all the gods ¹⁷⁰
 ‘ You worship, forth to leave this land, nor more
 ‘ Track it with blood,—so Alfred will provide
 ‘ Fit vessels, to convey you to your homes,—
 ‘ Your wives, your children, (whom our king has spared 495
 ‘ On yonder southern shore.)—Say, I am one
 ‘ Who loves not strife, who never smote a foe
 ‘ But with regret, pungent and keen, and now
 ‘ Seek their departure, rather than their lives :
 ‘ But if they scorn thee, tell them by the hand 500
 ‘ That wields the thunder, by the power that stills
 ‘ Old ocean when he raveth, I will meet
 ‘ Ivar and Hubba on yon plain beneath,
 ‘ And they shall learn the lesson, learnt but once !
 ‘ What Saxons can perform, when, in their might, 505

‘Aroused to vengeance.’—Oddune thus replied,
 ‘Monarch, I thank thee! Trust my warmest zeal.
 ‘I speed to bear the summons to the Danes.’

Down the steep hill he strode, and o’er the plain.
 The foe he now approach’d, waving the flag,— 510
 Emblem of parley.—Danes around him crowd.
 Thus they began, ‘Thy message!’ Oddune spake.
 ‘Where is your chief? Lead me to him. I bring
 ‘Words of high import.’—To the hall, at hand
 Oddune they lead, where in vindictive talk 515
 And loud upbraidings, all the Danish chiefs
 Sit in close commune.

‘Ah! a Saxon here!’
 Cried Ivar, as he enter’d. ‘Dost thou bring
 ‘Vows of thy monarch’s fealty, or some bribe 520
 ‘To stay our wrath?’ ‘Neither!’ the chief replied.
 ‘Neither!’ said Ivar. ‘By thy stately port
 ‘Thou seem’st like one, who never yet has felt
 ‘The Danish sword, how heavy, when it falls,
 ‘By Danish arm impelled. Thy business? Say! 525
 ‘I wait to hear thee! If thou stop to gaze
 ‘A second time around, this sturdy lance
 ‘Shall pierce thy heart.’—Oddune unterrified
 Thus answer’d, ‘Chieftain, if thou seek by frowns
 ‘To check my purpose, resolute, oh Dane, 530
 ‘Thou know’st me not! Mine is no coward’s breast!
 ‘I bear a message from our gallant king,—
 ‘Alfred, his words are these.’

Hubba upraised
 His ponderous spear, and had not Guthrum seized 535
 And stay’d his purpose, prostrate on the ground
 Oddune had lain. Him Ivar thus rebuked;
 ‘Thine anger check, good Hubba! let us know
 ‘This Saxon’s words, and, tho’ we after slay,
 ‘First hear his message.’—Hubba thus replied: 540

'Now will I hear thee, cool; Saxon, proceed.'
 Oddune prepar'd to speak, when Ivar cried,
 'Gaze not thus haughty! If thy message, man,
 'Be bold, as these thy looks, death shall hide both!—
 'And that before a second breath thou draw.' 545

'Talk to the hind of fear, I know it not!
 Oddune replied. 'These are the words I bear:—
 'Ye wasting men, to Denmark's savage shore
 'Swift as the eagle, flee, or by our swords 550
 'Soon shall ye fall, all fall.'

Ivar exclaim'd,
 'I will repress my anger. By the words
 'And looks so terrible, a stranger's heart
 'Might think thee some unconquer'd warrior bold, 555
 'From Hyperborean climes, but we thy might
 'Too well can estimate, vain man! to fear
 'Thee or thy monarch. Alfred bids us flee!
 'Sweet words to lull old-aged credulity!
 'Or, by his sword, soon shall we fall! all fall!' 560
 'This is so wonderful, that, to my mind,
 'It is as tho' some running brook, with words,
 'Blustering and loud, should threaten with his waves
 'To inundate old ocean. What the next
 'Said thy good king?'—Oddune thus answer made. 565
 'He bade me bear this message, 'Wherefore come—
 'To scourge our land—to waste this happy isle—
 'To wrong this people? whom your swords may slay,
 'But ne'er shall conquer, whilst yon sun remains,
 'Or earth endures. Alfred, our king, hath sent 570
 'Me to forewarn you. Instant on the ground
 'Cast ye your arms, and swear by all the gods
 'Ye worship, forth to leave this land, nor more
 'Track it with blood, so Alfred shall provide
 'Fit vessels to convey you to your homes.' 575

Hubba, with rage repress'd, thus answer made.
 'But shall the ships be strong and large? My words
 'May not be serious! Did thy monarch think
 'Danes, like the Assi,¹⁷¹ tremble at the beams 580
 'Spiders in sun-shine hurl? Lay down our arms!
 'What said he more?'—Oddune indignant cried
 'This, said our Monarch. Tell them I am one
 'Who loves not strife, who never smote a foe
 'But with regret, pungent and keen, and now 585
 'Seek their departure rather than their lives.'

Said Hubba, 'Kind! He pleadeth well the cause
 'Of one who fears the future!' Ivar rose
 And thus to Oddune spake.—

'Presumptuous man!
 'Ivar disdains to jeer thee! I will now 590
 'Talk to thee serious. Has thy king ne'er heard
 'The laws we honour, and the gods we serve;
 'That he should thus upbraid the true-born Dane
 'With loving blood too fondly? Dost thou know
 'What Odin to the faithful warrior speaks 595
 'In dreams and darkness—mid the raging storm
 'When, roused from slumber Ocean lifts his head,
 'Warring with winds that lash him?—Take thy sword,
 'Go forth and war! Fear but the coward's name,
 'And tho' in many a prostrate victim's heart 600
 'Thy sword be bathed, go on to devastate!
 'Scorn mercy! hear the pleader's voice in vain!
 'And ever when thy heart, shrinks on itself,
 'And pity whispers—think thou of the joys
 'Valhalla boasts, where never mortal came 605
 'Who waded not through blood, who never met
 'The foe in battle, and inured his soul
 'To deathful enterprize? What halls hast thou?
 'What object so commanding? motive, what,
 'To spur thee on to action? or delights 610

' Compared to those we hope for, when, 'mid gods,
 ' We join the valiant, and from hostile skulls
 ' With songs and rapture, quaff th' immortal mead ?
 ' These are our hopes, oh Saxon ! these the views
 ' That urge us on to glory. Now declare 615
 ' What more thy monarch said ! for I would hear,
 ' Albeit it make me smile and frown, like one
 ' Who sees his sire, toiling amid the waves,—
 ' Now mounting high, now buried from his sight.'

Oddune replied, ' These were my monarch's words, 620
 ' If they disdain thee, tell them, by the hand
 ' That wields the thunder, by the power that stills
 ' Old ocean when he raveth, I will meet
 ' Ivar and Hubba on yon plain, and prove
 ' What Saxons can perform, when in their might 625
 ' They strive for liberty.' Ivar exclaim'd ;
 ' While rage inflames his heart ! ' Who stills the sea ?
 ' Who wields the thunder ? Odin, god supreme,
 ' The lord of battle ! Is he not our friend ?
 ' Hath he not followed us from land to land, 630
 ' From sea to sea, rousing to strifes and wars ;
 ' And granting, e'en in death, to every Dane
 ' The eye that speaks of ecstasy, the heart
 ' That leaps with rapture ?'—

When with fiercer wrath 635
 Hubba exclaim'd, ' Tell thy devoted king—
 ' Of every Saxon, not one man shall live,
 ' By the next eve, to gaze upon the sun
 ' And bless his beams, when the rough air blows chill.'
 Guthrum uprose and cried, ' Forgive these words ! 640
 ' Say not they all shall perish ; but, each man
 ' Who owns not us the conquerors of the isle,
 ' And swears allegiance.' Ivar cried, ' Away !
 ' Thy senseless words, Guthrum, confuse mine ear !
 ' Speak not, but to inform yon daring prince 645

' He wears his crown, by sufferance from the Danes.
 ' Soon shall he perish, like that gallant youth
 ' Tulba,¹⁷² my brother, who from death sends forth
 ' Th' accusing groan, whilst loud our father calls
 ' For war and vengeance. Tho' thy king approach'd, 650
 ' And all his army, bending to the earth
 ' With vows and oaths to call us their liege lords,
 ' Yet would I scorn them, for, by Thor I swear,
 ' They all shall perish !

Hubba cried : ' All ! all ! 655

' Spare not a soul ! ' To Oddune thus he spake :
 ' For this imperious summons, and thy threats,
 ' Proud Saxon ! thou art doom'd to share the choice,
 ' Valkyres shall teach thee ! Thou shalt live to mourn
 ' But not survive our anger. Thou art now— 660
 ' Dead ! for I view thee on the green grass stretch'd !
 ' Prophetic visions dance before mine eye !
 ' I see thy arms, beside thee ! round are strew'd
 ' Saxons unnumber'd, who like thee provoked
 ' Our wrath and perish'd. Instant, flee away ! 665
 ' With second breath pollute not thou the air !
 ' Or, know the penalty !

He rais'd his spear,

When Oddune cried, ' Withhold ! if die I must,
 ' Let me this hour enjoy. Hear me, oh Danes ! 670
 ' One word, and I depart.

' This isle is ours

' By long inheritance ! We never roam
 ' From shore to shore, from distant clime to clime,
 ' To rob our fellows. Have we warr'd on you ? 675
 ' Have we alarm'd your coasts ? disturb'd your homes ?
 ' Destroy'd your people ? never, as ye know !
 ' Scourgers of this our isle, I bid you heed !
 ' Our voice is peace, but if you pant for war,
 ' Relentless, greedy of all violence— 680
 ' Saxons shall meet you ! Vengeance shall arise,

'Dress'd in new terrors ! seize her flaming brand,
 ' And join the fury of this fight, with eyes
 ' More fearful bright, than man hath yet beheld,
 ' Or Frenzy started at, gazing at Heaven. 685
 ' Prepare for combat ! On the coming morn,
 ' Our swords shall meet you ! God, the living God !
 ' Saxons confide in ! Now I leave your tent.'

Ivar exclaim'd, O Saxon ! didst thou ask,
 ' The Danish wrong endured, the powerful cause 690
 ' That urged us hither, bade us cross the seas ?
 ' Ask gasping Regner ! ask our murder'd sire !
 ' Ask the deep curses, and the fiery wrath
 ' He breath'd at death, when to his country's gods
 ' He look'd and cried, 'To join your laughing halls, 695
 ' Come I, bless'd spirits ! Yet, on Saxon land
 ' Let plagues alight ! let Slaughter glut himself
 ' With death and carnage.' Now, thine own heart ask,
 ' What Regner's sons might merit, if they fail'd
 ' To waste this isle, and with their valiant arms, 700
 ' Remorseless, scourge, thy hated race and thee !
 ' Dear is revenge !'

Like one o'er embers bent,
 Pond'ring on black designs, when, lo ! the fire
 That seem'd extinguish'd, gives a sudden blaze, 705
 And shows the face, the wrinkled brow, the eye
 That pored on vengeance and all deadly plans,
 Conceal'd before, so Hubba's face appear'd
 With such possession of infuriate rage
 When Ivar named his father. Thus he cried : 710

' By all the gods whose battles we have fought !
 ' By all the hopes that cheer us ! by the blood
 ' Our father curs'd this isle with, when he groan'd
 ' In Ella's dungeon, not one soul shall live
 ' O'er the next day ! Hundreds my sword will claim 715

To stay its appetite ! Its light shall gleam
 'New terrors on the dying ! Hungry wolves
 'Shall hover round ! The eagle from on high
 'Mark his near banquet, and with joyous scream
 'Stun death with horrors. To thy king at hand 720
 'These tidings bear ! and let him for the fight
 'Hold his heart ready ! for the coming morn,
 'When through the clouds the whizzing darts shall fly,
 'The buckler's thunder, and th' injured Danes
 'Shout 'mid the storm of vengeance ! Now, depart ! 725
 'Thy end is near !'

Oddune forbore to speak.

Self-confident, he left the Danes, and walk'd
 Slow through the hostile ranks, and down the hill
 And through the vale, and to the lofty spot 730
 Where Alfred and his army pitch'd their tents.
 The king beheld his coming, and advanced,
 With mind presageful of no tidings good.
 'What are thy words ?' he said, 'Uncertainty
 'Probes most my spirit.' 735

Oddune cried, 'Oh king !

'The Danes are hostile ! On the approaching morn,
 'Saxons must dare the fight !' Alfred exclaim'd :
 'Tho' seek I peace, yet fear I not to war !
 'Prepare for battle !' 740

Oddune and each chief,—
 Heard, and to rouse the Saxon hosts retire.

ALFRED :

BOOK XVIII.

ARGUMENT.

The Saxons descend into the plain to meet the Danes.—Discussions in the Danish camp.—Present Ivar, Hubba, Guthrum.—The battle of Eddington.

O'ER all the Saxon camp no man forgot
The conflict of the morrow. Thro' the night,
Sleep soothed them not, while martial images,—
The routed squadron, and the flying Dane—
Helmet, loud-sounding, and the clashing shield, 5
Ranged thro' their minds, and made the hour of rest
The scene of strife, a mimic battle-field !
Now morn appears. Impatient for the fight
The Saxon hosts await the conflict near—
Portentous !—in its copious streams, to shed 10
Blessings on Albion to remotest times,
Or—curses limitless !

At length the sun
Rose in his richest splendors.—Alfred thus
Cheer'd on his veteran warriors, crowding round— 15
' Brave men ! the hope of Britain, and her pride !
' On yonder hill, behold that enemy
' Whose wasting swords have left you now to boast
' Nought but your courage. That alone remains,—

'The fix'd, imperishable gift of Heaven ! 20
 'Base is the heart that in a wanton cause
 'Raises this weapon, but, to save our lives,
 'To guard from ruin all that man holds dear,
 'Sanctions the deed ! Who, 'mid this list'ning throng,
 'That mourns not, (by yon wasters,) home destroy'd, 25
 'Friends massacred, or wife, or children, slain ?
 'Long have the louring clouds our prospect dimm'd,
 'And Heaven seem'd adverse ; doubtless to correct
 'Some public vice, some confidence, in aught
 'Save Him who made us ; but, the mists retire ! 30
 'The dawn of hope is come ! the sun is risen !
 'And we are now to combat. Yonder host
 'Have dar'd the Lord Almighty ! Yonder host
 'Our God have dared defy, and now, His arm
 'Rises to vengeance. In the Lord of Hosts 35
 'We trust, our father's God ; and in the hour,
 'Fast coming, He will be our friend. Arise !
 'Go forth to conquer ! for this day shall Heaven
 'Fight on our side.—'Think, brave and gallant men !
 'What cause is yours. You, for your freedom, rights, 40
 'Your native homes, your faithful friends, the race
 'Who call you father, and the wife beloved,
 'Now lift the spear, and brandish pitiless
 'These slaughter-weapons. What, in life, can man
 'Seek, after slav'ry ? What can charm the heart 45
 'Of prostrate slave ? Yet e'en this wretched state
 'You are denied, for yonder Danes have sworn,
 'Full confident of victory, to spare,
 'When this day's strife is o'er, not one who lives,
 'Subject or Monarch. 50

Saxons ! do I now

'Declare of dangers you yourselves may feel
 'To fire your spirits ? Well I know your hearts
 'Far nobler, than, at time like this, to pore
 'O'er selfish ills ; you cast your ardent eyes 55

- ' To days far distant ! You with bitterness
 ' Think of your future race, your sons unborn,
 ' The generations, who, if we succeed
 ' Against this raging foe, from us will date
 ' Their every blessing, and in after times, 60
 ' When you are low and silent, look to Heaven,
 ' And pray, its fairest garlands you may bind,
 ' Its highest seats reward you. They shall sit,
 ' Beneath the fig-tree and the clustering vine,
 ' Contented, and look back on you, brave men ! 65
 ' Who fought, perchance who bled, to buy for them
 ' Their every joy. The flower of Christendom,
 ' Martel, that gallant chief ! who nobly met
 ' The conquering Saracen, and six long days
 ' Fought, sword to sword ; a conflict fitly named, 70
 ' Man's battle, ¹⁷³ rescuing earth from thralldom vile,
 ' Scarce drew his sword in more stupendous cause
 ' Than Saxons at this moment. Let us strive—
 ' In one bold effort, worthy of our name,
 ' Our foes to vanquish. Should you, patriots brave ! 75
 ' (Some round me now, with courage on their brow,)
 ' Fall for the land you love, the God you serve,
 ' E'en welcome death. Start not at name so dread ;
 ' For death will come, and many a gallant man,
 ' Now round me, prove ere long a breathless corse ! 80
 ' Myself may fall ! the tongue that speaks, this heart
 ' That throbs for action, soon upon the ground,
 ' Expos'd, and still, may lie. Sigh not at this,
 ' But rather let our hearts, both yours and mine,
 ' Exultant leap, and thank the God of Heaven, 85
 ' That in his sight deserving we appear
 ' To fight our country's battles, and receive
 ' The tear of gratitude from those behind.
 ' Smile then at death ! fear only to depart,
 ' Unconscious of discharging as you ought 90
 ' Your trying duties, which perform'd, let pain,

'Let anguish seize us—let soul-harrowing pangs
 'Rage their brief moment, the tempestuous scene
 'Soon will be o'er, and then awaits us all
 'Pleasures on earth, or blessedness in heaven. 95
 'Now, down the hill, advance to meet the foe!'

Tumult within the Danish camp prevails!
 Ivar, upon th' opposing hill beholds,
 Eager for war, the Saxons! High in air
 Their banners wave! and far as eye may reach 100
 Banks crowd on ranks, when thus in wrath he cried.—
 'Hubba! away. Thy counsels I disdain!
 'Thou hast deceived me! Where was yonder host,
 'When in thy pride thou vaunted'st, and didst call
 'This isle our own, by conquest nobly won? 105
 'Whence then is yonder host?—shouting aloud
 'Frantic defiance! Where their vanquish'd Prince?
 'A wand'rer, as thou told'st me in the woods,
 'And caves, and mountains; now, too late, perceived,
 'Hatching revenge. 'How hast thou spent thy time? 110
 'Where slept thy valour, whilst the Saxon King,
 'In secret plann'd his vengeance?'

Like the Bull

Goaded to madness, yet with bars confin'd,
 Hubba appear'd, 'till Ivar ceas'd; he then 115
 Cried vaunting: 'To thy native shores, again!
 'I heed thee not! I need not thy support?
 'Vain mortal, flee! and Guthrum, let him flee!
 'Flee all! myself shall meet the Saxons! this—
 'This arm shall meet them, and the gods record 120
 'Hubba's proud conquest! I such force will shew
 'As when the Ocean lays his monstrous hand
 'On some great continent.¹⁷⁴ Or winter's king—
 'Dark Frost, upon the whirlwind, when he rides—
 'Triumphant, and with potent word, arrests, 125
 'While in 'mid course, plunging o'er hideous rocks,

'The thundering cataract. What are my deeds,
 'Ask'st thou? Oh Ivar? Let the Cambrian shore
 'Answer thy question! Let the wasted towns,
 'Britain beholds, her villages destroy'd, 130
 'Her cots consum'd, her sons and daughters slain:
 'These are the deeds of Hubba, ere thou cam'st
 'A tame spectator to look on, and now,
 'Danger awaits thee, shrinkest at thy heart;
 'Unworthy of thy father and thy race.' 135

Ivar indignant cried, 'Spirit abhorr'd!
 'Take back thy rage! Reserve it to withstand
 'The adder's venom, checking kind with kind.
 'Scourge of my fortunes! Have I not the right,
 'The leader of the Danes, the elder far, 140
 'To ask thy ways, and, if I deem it well,
 'Check thee for evils, such as I behold
 'Thy inexperienced rashness hath brought down?
 'I know I have! And if thou question it,
 'This sword shall teach thine error!' 145

'Death be thine!'

Cried Hubba; and, his sword upraising, aim'd
 The fatal blow, that on the chieftain's shield
 Woke thunders, and as Ivar rais'd his sword,
 That never fell but death attended it, 150
 Guthrum his huge arm seized and cried, 'Forbear!
 'Chieftains, forbear! Distracting fears are mine!
 'Is this your vaunted zeal? Danes, stay your wrath!
 'Mark yonder Saxons! see their shining ranks!
 'Hear their loud shouts! their mad defiance, hear! 155
 'And from destruction save the Danish host!'

Ivar and Hubba paused. Both sheathed their swords.
 When Ivar thus exclaim'd to Guthrum near:
 'Chieftain, depart! Prepare the ranks, and swift,
 'If thou behold the Saxons! from yon hill, 16

'In proud array, descending to the plain,
'Approach and warn us!' Guthrum leaves the tent;
When Ivar to his brother thus again.

'Hubba, regard my words! Thy confidence 165
'Hath sprung a trap so fatal, that to burst
'Its fangs of iron, well might puzzle now
'Valfthrudinis' self.¹⁷⁶ For this I Britain left!
'For this I sought my native land, and roused
'(Breathing revenge,) fresh bands to follow me; 170
'Called up each dormant passion, made them feel
'Unquenchable desires, to spoil the race
'That slew our father, now at length to see
'The Saxon king, whom we so oft have driven
'Before our might, unconquer'd, and about 175
'With yon innumerable host, to dare
'Our highest valour. Not that I perceive,
'Fear at my heart. This breast must learn from thee
'What fear means, if it sought to know, for gods
'Fear not the giants, less than I the foe.¹⁷⁸ 180
'With such resistless forces as we boast,—
'Spirits inured to conquest, I might march
'Thro' earth triumphant, yet, that thou may'st see,
'In after times, what best may serve our cause,
'Ivar's experience hear.—Inferior ills, 185
'Leisure may combat, but to those alone,
'The mightiest, every chief, whom wisdom guides,
'At first directs his efforts, and subdues
'The cubless Bear, loud howling, ere he seek
'The timid Ermine, since I left this isle, 190
'Thee the sole leader, why didst thou forget,
'Britain that Bear, and on the Cambrian Ermine
'Waste thy best strength? Behold the bitter fruit!
'I knew not better than thyself, the force—
'The living-spring resources of his mind, 195
The Saxon king; the valour he hath shewn,

- ' The unconquerable firmness of his breast,
 ' Who in his youthful days, our ablest chiefs
 ' Laugh'd at, and worsted, making even Danes
 ' For a brief season, now to terminate, 200
 ' Behold their equal. Why didst thou pursue
 ' So mean a foe, ere on our mother earth
 ' Lay Alfred? See him on yon hill! Again
 ' I ask thee, with imperious tone, how came
 ' Oddune, that haughty foe, from Kenwith's walls 205
 ' To baffle thee, surrounding, and escape,
 ' When to that special point, our confidence
 ' Rested on thee? '

Hubba thus answer'd, ' Man!

- ' I scorn to call thee brother! Thou art one, 210
 ' A stranger, whom I hate with most deep hate!
 ' Instant the battle ceases, we will meet,
 ' Death on our swords, destruction in our eyes!—
 ' One to the earth shall fall—Hubba, or thou!
 ' When next thou sleepest, in thy dreams beware, 215
 ' Lest thy dead father, breathing streams of fire,
 ' Draw near thy tent, and Ivar's dastard soul
 ' Hurl to th' infernal worlds! Didst thou inquire,
 ' Proud mortal, why I rang'd the Cambrian hills
 ' Heedless of Alfred? Know! I thought it right! 220
 ' What would'st thou more? Upon the Saxon soil,
 ' No hostile army stood—no foe appear'd!
 ' Mid woods and hills they wander'd; whom our swords
 ' Spared but to fall on this more glorious day.
 ' And didst thou too inquire why Oddune fled! 225
 ' 'Twas whilst I to the gods the victim blood,
 ' Pour'd, as our fathers taught. The Saxons saw
 ' And fled at midnight.

' Now let Hubba ask

- ' Of lordly Ivar. Why didst thou refuse 230
 ' To slay the Saxon Captive? Why didst thou
 ' When Hubba claim'd her blood, tell thy weak tale

' Of former terrors, and oppose the vow
 ' Gods heard me make ? Soon shall her life appease
 ' My vengeance, and the instant yonder foes 235
 ' Have slept in death, tho' Odin from his clouds,
 ' With thund'ring voice, implored my wrath to cease,
 ' Yet would I answer, scornful, and thus swear,
 ' Upon the coming morn her blood shall flow !
 ' Ivar ! thou blam'st my caution, and would'st fain 240
 ' Make prudence thine alone : how was it proved,
 ' When, having reach'd this shore, thou left'st thy fleet,
 ' Unguarded, soon to blaze through heaven's wide vault
 ' Thy matchless folly ? When the hour arrives
 ' That to the assembled worlds, shall tell, who best, 245
 ' The warrior's part has acted, who has slain,
 ' Most foes, and to the applauding gods, can shew
 ' The greater host of skulls obtain'd in fight ;
 ' Then shall be seen whose sword, or mine, or thine,
 ' Best serv'd the cause we fight for, and deserved 250
 ' The noblest draughts of heaven's immortal mead.'
 He ceased. When Ivar, calm, thus answer'd him.

' Some crimes there are, and injuries so vast
 ' And 'bove all recompense, that to repay—
 ' In words, were, with a straw, to smite the man 255
 ' Who aim'd at murder. I will answer thee,
 ' Not Hubba ! now, not like thyself, with words,
 ' But, like a Danish hero.—One must die !
 ' Ivar or Hubba ! yet will we subdue,
 ' First, yonder Saxons, then the time for us. 260
 ' Soon as these wars are o'er—these Saxons slain—
 ' Their king laid low ; then will we shew our race
 ' Whom most to honour ! By our father's gods,
 ' Here do I swear, to end this day's offence
 ' Alone with blood !' 265

Cried Hubba, ' Nobly said !
 ' The same I swear ! Ivar, thy life or mine !'

As then he look'd to heaven, pausing with wrath,
 And meditating some vindictive curse,
 Guthrum return'd and cried, 'The hour is come ! 270
 'The Saxon army marcheth ! Fly we fast !
 'Alfred is near !'

The chieftains clash'd their shields,
 Frantic for war ; when Hubba cried, ' Withhold !
 Before the battle rages, let us first 275
 Our gods propitiate. The battle axe
 Will fall the heavier. Conflict to begin
 Before we supplicate !—I would as soon
 ' My father's bones dishonor.¹⁷⁷ Having said,
 (His buckler cast upon the earth,) he knelt. 280
 Him Ivar follow'd, when the chief began.

'Odin ! the waster god ! immortal sire !
 'Father of slaughter ! roaring deity !
 'Who bearest on thy flaming wings, thro' earth,
 'Thick desolation ! who from Valhall's halls 285
 'Callest the slain to join thee ; vengeful king¹⁷⁸
 'Thou who alone canst rouse the heart afresh,
 'When bucklers clash, and uproar terrible
 'Rages in battle, heed thy servant's prayer !
 'Give to the Danish sword yon Saxon's blood ! 290
 'Yon impious race, whose gods are not our gods,
 'Whose altars shew no victims, whose delight
 'Thou dost not share, nor Freya, nor great Thor,
 'Ruler of thunders ! therefore let them die !
 'Inspire our hearts with wrath, our swords with might, 295
 'That shall to Nephlehem's regions bear them all !

He ceased, when both the brother Danes uprose,
 And rushing like the war-horse to the fray,
 Drew near their troops,—that silent stood, whose hearts
 Boil'd with black hate and wrath unquenchable. 300
 Soon as they saw their leaders, demon shouts
 Sounded through all the air, and savage yells

Like of the lion's whelp, when pinch'd by hunger
 'He makes the forests roar,' Ivar exclaim'd,—
 Casting his eye upon the raven flag 305
 That waved beside him, 'Lo! it flaps its wings!
 'Subjects, rejoice! the raven flaps his wings!' 179
 'Triumph is ours!' Again the loud shout rang,
 When Ivar thus :
 'Behold in yonder host 310
 'That enemy whom we so oft have fought,
 'So oft have vanquish'd, and who now shall meet
 'His final overthrow. Ye fearless hosts,
 'Ye vet'rans, whom my valiant father led
 'Through all the north, driving each foe, like chaff 315
 'Before the whirlwind, yet, to crown our toil,
 'One task remains. There are the Saxons! there
 'Our only foe, whom meet, and Britain yields!
 'Weak are their bucklers! weak their puny arms;
 'Their hearts are weak! Before our conquering sword, 320
 'Each Saxon's head must stoop, yet one request
 'Make I, Oh Danes! Their monarch, leave to me,
 'Touch not one hair of Alfred! Let this sword
 'Contend with his, and by th' immortal gods,
 'My might shall lay him low.' 325

Now through the air,
 He rais'd his monstrous arm, that like the limb
 Of some huge oak, appear'd, the forest's pride,
 Slow waving to the fury of the blast.
 Again he spake. 'One word, and then for war. 330

'When to the plain beneath I lead you down
 'It is enough to know that ye are Danes,
 'T' ensure our triumph, yet, let victory
 'Glut not your rage! nor stay the work of death
 'Till all are slain! 'till in one common flood 335
 'Each Saxon with their king, has drench'd the ground.
 'Behold the hostile ranks! They court the fight!

‘Shall we be backward? Danes, behold your prey.’

Swift down the hill they rush, and in the plain
Meet the bold Saxon! Lo! the fight begins! 340
The battle rages! sword with sword hath met!
And hark the terrors of the sounding shield—
That, like two sheets of ice, meet, and thro’ Heaven
Send their loud dissonance and horrid crash!

The snowy beard of some Norwegian crag, 345
High in the elements, which feels the blast
Shake its grey lock, and, to the subject earth,
At length rolls headlong, spreading, as it rolls,
One wide destruction, well displays the course
Of Alfred’s sword, as through the Danish ranks 350
It breaks its way, strewing the plain with death;
Whilst Ivar, roused to madness, singly seeks
The Saxon king, scorning the mortal force
That dares oppose him. Like the mountain brook,
Choak’d with the summer weed, that, with the storm, 355
Swoln into fury, urges on its way
Bursting all barriers.

See! The chieftains meet!

Alfred and Ivar! Blow for blow is given!
Death-doing work is there! God aid the just! 360

A L F R E D :

BOOK XIX.

ARGUMENT.

The Danes defeated—Guthrum retreats to a neighbouring castle—Death of Ivar and Hubba—Burial of the slain—Oddune sent to demand Guthrum's surrender.

‘SPARE! Spare the vanquish’d!’ Alfred cried. ‘Oh spare, Subjects! the flying foe.’

The routed Danes

Swift from the fight escape!—the Saxons close
Press after them, tracking the ground with blood. 5
And such an overthrow no eye had seen!
Still on they sped, swift as the hurricane,
(Bearing reluctant, Guthrum from the fray)
Crushing each other, till the fort they gain,—
Adjoining, thro’ whose gates they wildly rush 10
All trembling, as the solitary blade
On the wide desert when the tempest blows.

Up to the gate came Oddune! in his hand
He held a lance, all crimson, and when safe
He saw the Danes, the huge gates sudden closed; 15
Mists of uncertain form before his eyes
Awhile seem’d floating, and, amid the gust
Of momentary rage, he thought the walls
Parts of some monstrous and unflying foe,
At which he hurl’d his lance. When thus he cried, 20

Turning to his near forces, 'Guard the gates!
'Now must I seek the king.'

Forth to the vale

Eager he speeds, and Alfred soon approach'd,
Who saw him not, intent on aiding those— 25
The wounded, who o'er all the plain were stretch'd,
Silent in agony, or, with a groan
Of numbing import, gazing stern on death.
When, looking up, Alfred beheld the chief!
He spake not, each the hand of fellowship 30
Gave, but in silence; when at length, the king :

'Oddune, the song of praise! Let the heart speak
'With voice articulate, for, less than this
'Would wake loud accusations from the ground.
'The fight is o'er! The vict'ry now is ours! 35
'Behold the hostile standard! see the flag
'Danes trusted in! but, through Almighty power,
'With lion strength endued, this reeking hand
'Grasp'd the proud raven, whilst the other beat—
'Ivar to earth. Say, what the fate of Hubba?' 40

Oddune thus answer made. 'In the past fight,
'I saw a monstrous man, bulwark'd by slain,
'Whose look was terror, and whose every blow
'Gave death a victim. Many a Saxon brave
'Lay low before him, when I knew the chief— 45
'Hubba, and rush'd to war. The strife was hard!
'This sword the foe discomfited. He fell,
'And as 'mid gore he writhed, I sought again
'The hotter strife.'

Alfred exclaim'd, 'Brave man, 50
'This deed became thee! Point the spot where lay
'The hostile chief! If yet he live, this heart,
'Forgetful of the past, will shew what wrongs
'Saxons can bear and pardon.'

As they now 55

Hubba explored among the field of blood,
 Haggard their look, from the terrific sight
 Of dead and dying, Oddune spake, 'Oh, king!
 'Where is the brother, Ivar, that fierce man,
 'Whose frown yet awes my soul.' Alfred replied, 60
 'Soon shalt thou see the chieftain. At this time,
 'It is enough, to tell thee he is slain,
 'To say—we measured swords. And Guthrum, where?'
 When in a softer tone, and tremulous,
 Alfred enquired,—'Where is that other name— 65
 'Dear to my heart, Alswitha?'

Oddune cried,

'This sword pursued the Dane up yonder hill
 'To the near fort. Thou se'st it! Thither sped
 'Guthrum, and a few foll'wers, breathless, wild, 70
 'Doubting if 'live or dead. I saw the gates,
 'Before the Saxons reach'd, loud-grating close.
 'Round are thy troops, and doubtless there abides—
 'Our honour'd queen.'
 Alfred replied, 'Heaven grant— 75
 'Oddune, thy words no fable.'

Now they reach,

Silent, where Hubba stretch'd his monstrous frame,
 Death near him, thick as the autumnal leaves
 Where never wind approaches. Dread the sight! 80
 Wounded and prostrate lies the mighty chief!—
 Tho' living, writhing in his agony!—
 His look still terrible!—Alfred drew near,
 (Oddune beside) The Dane now raised himself,
 Unwieldly grown, and with the eye of fire 85
 Met Alfred's sight undaunted—Suddenly
 Tumult mysterious tortures Hubba's heart!
 He look'd upon the king, and gnash'd his teeth!
 Convuls'd, then utter'd with infuriate rage,—
 'I know thy visage! Thou the *Harper* art! 90

'Spy in our camp! Oh, for the lightning's power
'That I might blast thee!'

Alfred thus replied.

'Dane! we are friends. This day hath seen our wrath
'Vanish! All help attend thee! Thou may'st learn, 95
'Yet, ere thou die, the Saxon character—
'In combat, pitiless, in vict'ry, mild.
'Receive our aid!' When, instant, Hubba look'd,
Stern as when Winter darts his arrowy flakes
On some lone traveller, casting his dark eye 100
Upon the king, on Oddune, him whose sword
Th' unconquer'd now had conquer'd. Then he gazed
On many a breathless corse; yet not a word
Deign'd he to speak, he heaved no groan, he mark'd,
Unmoved, the circling spoil; when, with a frown 105
More terrible, he grasp'd a dagger near,
And plung'd it to his heart. Thus Hubba died!

Awhile they stood and wonder'd, when the King
Cried, 'Other scenes await us! Oddune now,
'Assist the wounded! be the hour improved 110
'With all humanity, and let not one—
'Not e'en a Dane, from Saxon hand receive
'Requiting wrong.'

Oddune, his monarch's words
Heard, and departed; whilst the king himself 115
Sped through the fallen ranks, upheld the faint,
Relieved the dying, succour'd those who bled,
And to new deeds of kindness prompted each
Of all around.

One man there was, a Dane, 120
Who, tho' his limbs were mangled, laughing lay;
And as the king advanced, near to the spot,
He saw the foe was aged, and prepared
Solace to yield, when loud the Dane exclaim'd:

'Obtruder on the bleeding warrior, hence! 125

'Or if thou stay'st, I ask thee with thy sword
 'To finish the good work; for, here to die,
 'Seek I most earnest. Jomsburg¹⁰⁰ is my home,
 'And Palnatoka my death-dealing chief.
 'Fear! I disdain thee. Solace with thine aid 130
 'Some coward supplicant of Saxon race,
 'I spurn the boon. I for this glorious hour
 'That soon shall give me freedom, and bestow
 'Immortal honours, have sustain'd all ills—
 'Thro' many a clime endured the battle's brunt, 135
 'Fearing the coward's death. I fear'd in vain.
 'I feel the searching pangs, that tell me, soon
 'The strife will cease! I hear the God of War!
 'I see him now! He beckons me! His hand,
 'Prize of the brave, holds out the frothy mead! 140
 'Hail, Valhall!' when he heav'd his labouring breath,
 And laugh'd, and died!

Alfred beheld the sight,

Pondering awhile with sad and downcast brow:
 A sigh escap'd, and in his heart he cried, 145
 'Oh Lord, thy kingdom come!'

After long toil.

When each had known all succour and all care;
 And Mercy, with the full meal satisfied,
 Turn'd from the feast; Alfred aloud exclaim'd, 150

'Saxons approach!' To hear their monarch's words,
 Obedient, all draw near, list'ning so still,
 As when some spacious grove, silence o'ertakes,
 And every tree and leaf exalts itself,
 And, looking to the Father of the skies, 155
 Worship in silence. Alfred thus began:

'Brave Saxons! with what joy I meet you all—
 'What ecstasy, past language, now to say,
 'The fight is o'er!—The day is won! This hour—

' Britain is saved ! Where is the haughty Dane ? 160
 ' Where are the men whose impious tongues pronounced
 ' Our certain fates, and on the morn, defied,
 ' The God our fathers honour'd ? Where are they,
 ' Who with presumptuous pride, aloud proclaim'd
 ' This day should be our last ? Behold them there ! 165
 ' Strew'd o'er the plain ! Where, Saxons ! are the men,
 ' Whom late you dreaded ? whose vindictive swords
 ' We oft have met in combat—heard aghast,
 ' The scream we could not succour, and beheld,
 ' The flaming brand our dwellings light upon, 170
 ' And knew no middle choice, but death or flight ?
 ' Where are the men, who with infuriate wrath
 ' Stalk'd through the land, and with their swords destroy'd
 ' What fire and famine left us ?—View them there !
 ' Where are the men who on their reeking spears 175
 ' Toss'd our mild infants, and the aged slew—
 ' The fathers and the mothers of us all ?
 ' Behold them there ! Silent and stretch'd in death !
 ' This is a *proud* day for the Saxon name !
 ' This is a fight that through succeeding years 180
 ' Shall sound our praises, and from hosts unborn
 ' Call forth the grateful song ; We hence will teach
 ' Our infant sons, while smiling on our knee,
 ' To lisp with pride, the name, to Saxons dear,
 ' Conjoin'd with which all pleasant thoughts arise.— 185
 ' The name of Eddington !¹⁸¹

'Subjects, rejoice !

' Our toils are o'er ! This green and fertile land
 ' Now may we till ! Our homes made doubly dear
 ' Shall greet their masters, and prosperity 190
 ' Crown this our lovely isle !¹⁸²

As when some blast

Sweeps o'er the forest, and with thundering roar,
 Sounds long and loud : whilst e'en the prostrate thorn,
 With its faint voice augments the chorus wide, 195

Such was the voice of Saxons, with their shout—
 ‘God and our king!’ Thro’ all the concave spread
 The loud acclaim, whilst here and there, with pangs
 Struggling, the wounded caught the gen’ral joy—
 The maddening ecstasy, and feebly cried, 200
 ‘God and our king!’

After due course, again,
 Alfred address’d them. ‘Saxons! to me, sweet
 ‘Your universal rapture, and the more,
 ‘For that you think of God, and own his hand. 205
 ‘Rejoice with trembling, lest, in being thus
 ‘From bondage rescued, and most galling chains,
 ‘Your hearts be harden’d, and ye look to Heaven,
 ‘Not with the thankful eye, adoring him;
 ‘But urged by pride, ascribing to yourselves 210
 ‘This triumph, which our God himself hath wrought,
 ‘We the weak instruments.—

‘I now would fain
 ‘Speak of our fallen brethren. Honour’d men,
 ‘In dust laid low, receive our grateful praise! 210
 ‘Tho’ sunk in death, tho’ from this glorious hour
 ‘This day of triumph taken; tho’ denied
 ‘That earthly recompence, which now, ere long,
 ‘Your brethren, we shall taste; ages unborn
 ‘Shall shout your worth, and we will honour you. 215
 ‘Injured and noble spirits! If there live,
 ‘And that there does, we must not, cannot doubt,
 ‘A God of Justice, who of human ways
 ‘Takes cognizance, his piercing eye beholds
 ‘The virtuous men, ’mid trials such as yours, 220
 ‘And doubtless hath prepared peculiar seats,
 ‘For those who own his hand, implore his aid,
 ‘Toss’d in the turmoil of a strife like ours—
 ‘For those who in their country’s cause may bleed.’

When the king ended, not as heretofore 225

Rose the loud plaudit. Theirs was feeling deep,
 Too potent and o'erpow'ring for vain words.
 At length th' intensity of suffering pass'd,
 A calm and sober grief thro' all their hearts—
 Stole, like the summer eve, when day retires 230
 Gliding, by imperceptible degrees,
 From light to twilight, darkening still, till round—
 All nature sinks to quietness and night.

Breaking the pause, so sacred, Alfred thus.
 ' This luxury of grief, we must repress. 235
 ' Now Duty's voice is heard. The honours meet,
 ' We must bestow upon our brethren slain.
 ' Prepare their graves!—and on their hallow'd dust,
 ' Let our tears fall.'—

None answer'd, but, with zeal, 240
 The brave survivors,—sadness at their heart,
 Needing no urgency, the deep dark graves,
 Form for their fallen brethren, there to rest,
 Till, like a scroll, the Heavens shall pass away.

Reflecting on war's dread vicissitudes, 245
 Upon its sable woes, its racking cares,
 Thus Alfred, with the burden'd heart oppress,
 His plaintive accents pour'd in Oddune's ear,
 ' Heart-searching thought! These tenants of the tomb,
 ' Late, with the glow of health, no more shall see— 250
 ' Day and the joyous sun; this busy earth,
 ' And feel the warrior's zeal, the patriot's fire!
 ' These generous impulses are known no more!—
 ' In yon capacious chambers, down in earth,
 ' Illustrious men, the pride of Wessex' land, 255
 ' Cold, breathless lie! with all their trophies crown'd!
 ' Yet, on the victor's field, the conqueror's car,
 ' Sorrow must wait!—A mournful retinue
 ' Follow the track of war!—And in this spot

' Where prowess, valour, worth, promiscuous lie, 260
 ' What anguish shall it waken ! Pangs severe !
 ' Fathers, in vain, shall sigh o'er sons beloved !
 ' Mothers retire in silence ! Sisters weep !
 Wives, sorrowing, stand, bereaved and desolate !
 ' Friends, smite their breast ! While many a promised bride,
 ' And maid, desponding, in the rolls of death
 ' Shall read the name most precious, never more
 ' To solace with the music of his voice,
 ' And throw o'er life a halo ! She recalls
 ' Her lover's parting look—too plain, that spake— 270
 ' I never more shall see thee ! '—Kindred, friends,
 ' The bitterness of grief to moderate,
 ' Now fondly tell the virtues of the dead !
 ' Ah ! there they sit, the tear upon their cheek,
 ' Circling the hearth, once cheerful, cheerless now ! 275
 ' Each soothing each, with fond solicitude,
 ' And all requiring what so free they give !
 ' Till the reviving thought,—calls up afresh—
 ' Smiles, like the rain-drench'd flower, for memory tells,
 ' They for their country fought, and, to redeem 280
 ' Their land from thralldom, for their country fell !'

Roused from his musings by a distant crowd,
 Alfred to Oddune spake. ' What tumult that ?—
 ' Out on the farthest confines of the trench
 ' Where, mournfully, the dead are now interred ? 285
 ' Whilst I, oppress'd with grief, awhile retire,
 ' Search out the hidden cause, and bear me word.'
 The chieftain hastens to the spot.—No noise
 Mark'd the assemblage.—Oddune nearer draws.
 He asks, he learns the truth !—Oh ! misery ! 290
 The crowd are bearing to his last long home
 The youth *Montalto* !—Oddune clasp'd his hand !
 He spake not. The tumultuous sigh he gave !
 A youth, the bier preceding, chants the *Dirge*,—
 Hosts following, who in plaintive chorus join. 295

Brother! late our joy, no more
 Earth shall see thee and admire!
 Thou hast left our mortal shore!
 Thou hast soar'd to regions higher!
 The sighs that follow thee declare
 What thy worth and virtues were!—

CHO. *Gentle spirit, good and true,
 Here we bid our last adieu!*

To thy lowly bed descend!
 Blessings on thy memory rest!
 Patriot stern, and faithful friend!
 Anguish heaves our every breast
 That, while sun and stars remain
 None shall view thy face again!—

CHO. *Gentle spirit, good and true,
 Take, O, take our last adieu!*

Thine were not affections cold!
 Thou wast charter'd from above!
 Form'd in nature's kindest mould,
 But, to know thee, was to love!
 The pang we feel! 'The tear we shed!
 As we bear thee to the dead!—

CHO. *Gentle spirit, good and true,
 Here receive our last adieu!*

Thou hast shed thy final tear!
 Brief the light that round thee shone!
 Joys and sorrows,—hope and fear,
 All with thee is hush'd and gone!
 Life!—an onward—rolling stream!
 What a shadow! What a dream!

CHO. *Gentle spirit, good and true,
 Must we breathe the last adieu?*

'Oh! what visions rise before!
 Bliss!—where thou shalt share a part!
 There are joys for evermore
 That await the pure in heart!

Kindling with the hope divine,
Here our brother we resign!—

CHO. *Gentle spirit, good and true,
Now our long, our last adieu!*

Oddune convulsive cried, ‘I’ll join the train,
‘And weep in silence o’er his obsequies!’

The rites perform’d, the *chaunter* hastens near,
And with obeisance, Oddune, thus address’d.
‘Oh, chieftain! wretchedness supreme is mine! 300
‘My friend, my loved associate is no more!
‘We side by side late in the battle fought’—
‘Stop!’ Oddune cried. ‘Haste *with* me to the king.
‘Reserve thy mournful tale. Let Alfred learn,—
‘Touching his tender heart, whate’er thou know’st 305
‘Of poor *Montalto*.’

To the monarch, near,
Gazing on earth, both pass oppress’d. And now,
The royal presence reaching, Oddune thus,—
‘*Montalto* is no more!—This youth will speak.’ 310
‘Grief checks his voice. The king, a chilling pang
Felt writhe his bosom, when he spake. ‘Say on.
‘What know’st thou of *Montalto*?’—Bending low,
The youthful stranger, faltering, thus began.

‘When all through Wessex’ land, *war* call’d to arms, 315
‘To meet the wasting Danes, *Montalto* cried
‘Shall I be backward?—hear my monarch’s voice,—
‘My country’s lamentation, and, unmoved,
‘Behold the wide-spread ruin and dismay!
‘Shall I shrink back inglorious?—ease prefer— 320
‘The coward’s base and ignominious ease—
‘To the illustrious path, by patriots trod?—
‘Shall I unnerve my arm, and thus encourage
‘Denmark to waste the land that gave me birth?
‘Forbid it Heaven! I rush at honour’s call! 325

' Farewell my song ! Farewell my crook and pipe !
 ' Farewell !—O, anguish to my bleeding heart !
 ' Farewell *Matilda* !—To the wars I go,
 ' And when returning with my laurels crown'd,
 ' Joyous will be our meeting !—whilst I tell 330
 ' Of conflict, and of triumph, when our hosts,
 ' Led on by Alfred, whelm'd our foes in death ! '
 ' We fought together in the last hard fight ;
 ' And noble were his feats. A bolder man
 ' The sword ne'er wielded. Many a Dane lay low 335
 ' Before his val'rous arm, but, at the last
 ' O, anguish to my spirit ! at the last,
 ' A foeman rais'd his massy battle-axe,—
 ' It fell !—and on the ground *Montalto* lay,
 ' Never to rise again !—Would that my head 340
 ' Had met the deathful blow !—This sword, O king !
 ' Th' assailant sent to death ! '

The sigh prevails.

When, stifling sorrow, thus the king bespake.
 ' This is a moving tale ! I knew him not, 345
 ' Yet had his virtues reach'd me. He will long
 ' Awaken pity, not the least in me.
 ' The grave that bears *Montalto*, richer spoil—
 ' Holds not ! and hallow'd be his memory ! '
 When turning to the youth, he thus began. 350
 ' Whence art thou ?' Bending thus he answer gave.

' Most noble king, thy condescension great.
 ' I am a woodman's son, in Selwood's wilds.
 ' There was I born, and there will be my home.
 ' I left my father's, and my mother's cot 355
 ' When to the wars thou first didst call thy friends ;
 I left them, left my *harp*,—the *crystal brook*
 ' (Still its sweet music warbles in my ear !)
 I left it all, and now the wars are o'er,
 ' Back shall I haste rejoicing, and henceforth 360

'Love, cherish parents, precious to my heart,
 'And never more to leave them!'—Alfred look'd—
 Full sorrowful at Oddune! Oddune back
 Return'd the searching glance! yet not a word
 Spake either, when the chieftain, Oddune thus. 365
 'Whose was that simple *dirge* which late I heard?'
 The blush declares what words forbear to tell.
 When sad, the monarch thus the silence brake.
 'Brave youth, thou hast my favour. Now withdraw.
 'Thou shalt ere long be summon'd to our presence.' 370
 Revolving, lost in wonderment, the tear
 Still on his cheek, and sorrow at his heart,
 Bending, the valiant woodman's son retires.

Alfred to Oddune spake. 'Afflictions deep
 'Await that youth. I may alleviate, 375
 'But cure I cannot. Didst thou mark his eye?
 'He has a noble bearing. Well I judge,
 'A worthy son of *that* most worthy sire.'
 Oddune replied, 'Above the multitude
 'He has a soul commanding. Kindred minds, 380
 'By a mysterious sympathy unite,
 'And such we witness here. *Song* has a power,
 'Attractive, and *Montalto*, and this youth
 '(In *heavenly lore*, full clear, proficients both)
 'Soon felt the bonds of friendship.—I will bear 385
 'The tidings of his parents:—that the turf
 'Rests on their peaceful heads.—Strange fancies rise!
 'When to my castle hastening, in my train
 'This youth shall stand, and when the softener *Time*
 'Calms down *Matilda's* sorrow, and is dry, 390
 'The tear which falls for parents, call'd to heaven,
 'Haply the maid, whom, seeing, all admire,
 'May look propitious on *Montalto's* friend!

Alfred replied, 'Such thoughts but ill accord

' With circumstance like ours, yet, should it be, 395
 ' Such worth and valour meeting, all will hail.
 ' The dowry of a king shall be the maid's,
 ' Nor shall the youth regret my countenance.
 ' But, chieftain ! other scenes demand our care.'

Now Alfred, with that friend, that valiant man— 400
 Oddune, o'er all th' ensanguined plain, moved slow,
 Musing on human glory. They beheld,
 Pangs at their heart ! the fruits of war and strife,
 Their dread memorials crowding on their sight.

' Screen me,' cried Alfred ! O, thou power Most High ! 405
 ' From the dark passions, fierce and deadly feuds,
 ' Which quench the heavenly spark, and to a fiend
 ' Transform thy likeness, imaged forth in man.
 ' Is life so small a thing, so little worth
 ' That we should with it sport in idleness, 410
 ' And recklessly, for some imagin'd good,
 ' Hazard our all ! resign so rich a prize—
 ' This state of being !—scorn the imperious voice
 ' Of duty here,—the soothing promises
 ' Of joys hereafter, and unbidden rush 415
 ' Before Heaven's great tribunal !—Such do those
 ' Who deal in blood ; who on their couch of rest
 ' Hatch murder, and war's dread vicissitude.
 ' Not on the rude and giddy multitudes
 ' Heap I these charges. On Ambition's head 420
 ' The weight, the curse of blood rests mountain-like !
 ' Ours is defence alone. We could look up,
 ' Asking heaven's blessing, and in victory raise,
 ' As we with grateful spirits now have done,
 ' The warm, th' o'erflowing incense of the heart— 425
 ' To Him who sits supreme, Great Lord of all !
 ' Hasten on the day, Sovereign Omnipotent !
 ' When swords and spears the peaceful plough-shares form !

‘ When wars through earth shall cease.—Thy kingdom come !
 ‘ Virtue extend her empire o’er the world, 430
 ‘ And man behold a brother’s face in man !

‘ Now royalty shines on me ; now I sway
 ‘ A nation’s sceptre ! Now I view around
 ‘ Obedient thousands, and behold no foe
 ‘ To check the secret purpose of my mind.— 435
 ‘ May I discharge the duties of a crown !
 ‘ Call Wisdom from her hiding-place : once more
 ‘ Cherish the good, and bid Instruction’s voice
 ‘ Direct the rude, and train the ignorant. ¹⁸³
 ‘ Oh, Oddune ! let the king who coldly thinks, 440
 ‘ And feebly executes, regard with scorn
 ‘ These soul-ennobling aims, and meanly creep
 ‘ Thro’ a long reign that loud demands the race
 ‘ Of glory and true usefulness, yet I,
 ‘ Nursing great thoughts of man, his future hopes,— 445
 ‘ His destinies, when this brief life is o’er,
 ‘ And of attainments now within his power,
 ‘ Will prize the thought, that e’en a nation’s rank,
 ‘ The state she holds, her strength and eminence
 ‘ In science fair, and all ennobling arts, ¹⁸⁴ 450
 ‘ Rests ponderous on the man who wears a crown.
 ‘ Not as the baseless visions of the night
 ‘ Be these my thoughts, Oh ! Searcher of all hearts !’

The King and Oddune now drew near the spot
 Where, in the conflict death had busiest been. 455
 There Ivar lay ! Alfred beheld the chief !
 Tho’ breathless, he approach’d him with strange thoughts
 Half doubting, lest his gory corse should rise
 In madder fury than before, and dart
 Sudden destruction ; for his hand yet grasp’d
 The monstrous sword which at the king had struck, 460
 And pierced his helm, e’en with the brazen shield
 Scorning to stay. (Oh ! cease thy creeping dread !

He never more will vex the earth, or Thee !)

Alfred to Oddune thus his speech pursued.

'Here rests our foe, once fear'd, but now no more ! 465

'Here must our vengeance cease. This sight, I mourn :

‘For never, Oddune, will a christian man

‘Behold his fellow, sunk in abjectness ;

'Consign'd to darkness,—his distemper'd breast—

'The seat of all the passions fierce and blind, 470

'Hate genders; darkest child of hell, nor feel

'Pangs at his heart press heavy. Let us now

'Bestow funeral honors on these men—

' Ivar and Hubba. Let us for the dead.

' Here on this memorable spot, erect 475

'The lofty barrow,¹⁸⁵ that posterity

' Often may visit where in quietness

'Lie the fierce spoilers, Saxons once overthrew.'

To those around he spake. 'Take this huge corse,

'What once was Ivar! and that other chief, 480

' Hubba, who 'mid von deathful heap abides,

'Tow'ring above his fellows : round them place

' Their thousands slain, and o'er them heap the earth ;

'That coming generations may rejoice

' At our proud triumph,—Ere the work begin, 485

‘Your king inquires.—Around him, stands there one

'Who knows of Ethelney, that peaceful isle—

‘Where Thone meandering glides the woods among?’

The words scarce utter'd, voices earnest rose,—

Out mid the farthest ranks,—‘ We know it well.’ 490

When, hastening up, two comely youths appear.

The king survey'd them earnestly, then said,

'Did not you stand beside me in the fight,

'And do me service?' 'One, the elder, cried,

' We did, oh king ! When two fierce Danes press'd on, 495

'And would have slain thee, whilst thou strovest hard—

'With Ivar, Denmark's chief, we rush'd between,
 'And after struggle fierce, protracted long,
 'Laid them both low. Content with serving thee,
 'We join'd the raging contest !' 500

Alfred cried,
 'Brave youths ! tho' 'mid the fight engaged, mine eye
 'Glimps'd you beside me, and a certain sense,
 'Confus'd, of danger, struck my mind ; unknown
 'Till these your words. Receive your Monarch's thanks ! 505
 'Hereafter will I deal you due reward :
 'For never have I found true modesty
 'Not near allied to worth. But now declare,
 'What know you of the Isle of Ethelney ?'

'There were we born,' they answer'd, 'tis our home : 510
 'We are a neat-herd's sons, Ceolric named,
 'Who there, with Acca our good mother, dwells.'

'Ah ! is it so ?' cried Alfred, 'this indeed,
 'Comes to my heart, and you will shortly know—
 'Brave youths, my meaning. Haste to Ethelney 551
 'Acca, your mother warn, and your good sire,
 'Instant to leave their cot, and hither bring,
 'With wonted care, an infant child, so late,
 'Committed to them. Speed ! and let the man,
 'Sigbert, who there abides, attend their course.' 520
 Lost in astonishment ! lowly they bow,
 And with conjectures opposite and wild,
 Haste to their lone abode.

'Now,' Alfred cried,
 'View the unburied Danes, and heap the pile,— 525
 'Commemorating.' At their monarch's words,
 They turned, and o'er the slain uppled the earth,
 Stripping its surface, 'till at length there stands,
 A mountain by apparent magic rear'd.¹⁸⁶
 Whilst thus engaged, Alfred to Oddune thus. 530

‘Tho’ in my country’s greater cause engaged,
‘And silent of Alswitha, now my heart,
‘Blameless may think of her. In yonder pile
‘Guthrum abides. I thirst to let him learn
‘How he is prized by one he little knows. 535
‘Bear this my signet!—his security,
‘Alike it shall ensure his life, his welfare.
‘Declare that Alfred honours him. His word,—
‘His oath is pass’d.—And, Oh, soul-stirring thought!
‘Haply Alswitha, in that hostile fort 540
‘Lingers in sad captivity. Her rank
‘Reveal not, but thine efforts best exert
‘To win her freedom, and conduct her here.
‘Faint hope is mine! Now speed thou on thy way.
‘Oddune, add this to all thy services, 545
‘And trust thy prince!’ The chieftain press’d his heart,
And hastes to bear the summons to the Dane.

A L F R E D :

BOOK XX.

ARGUMENT.

While Guthrum, in the Castle to which he had retired, is consulting with his troops, Oddune arrives; demands his submission to Alfred; is refused: claims Guthrum's captive; Alswitha receives her liberty; her interview with Alfred.

'DEATH! Death!' cried Guthrum, as he pass'd the gate
Of the near castle, with the wretched few
Who 'scaped the fight. 'Death! death!' the chieftain cried,
'Why hast thou lagged so heavily? Why thus
'Spared me for anguish, such as never man 5
'Felt 'till this hour? Why 'mid our brethren slain
'Lay not this head? Now, hither am I come
'To taste the bitterness of death, yet lose
'Its cheering joys. I curse you, coward legs!
'You urged my flight! Give me yon axe. My hands 10
'Shall punish you, oh traitors!' Forth he grasp'd
'A massy axe, and stood as he would strike—
When far he cast it. 'Not for partial death,
'Seek I,' he cried, 'but death complete and full.'

Turning to those around, he wrathful spake. 15
'Why are ye here? oh Danes! Ye heartless throng!
'Why fled you hither? Cowards! scorn of men!
'Yet, why was I a coward? Why was I—

'Borne onward to this place by recreant Danes ?
 'Why shrank I from destruction, when I saw 20
 'This mortal overthrow ? Now, chieftains, say—
 'In this concurrence of all direful things
 'How we may save our honour, all beside—
 'We must resign !—Our noble princes slain !
 'Our valiant army vanquish'd ! Hope itself 25
 'Quench'd in the rayless night ! Now freely speak !'

One answer'd thus, 'Doom'd as we are to death,
 'We must resolve on some transcendent deed—
 'To sweeten death ; and to the world display
 'Achievement worthy of our country's fame.— 30
 'Vengeance and rage remorseless ! When night comes
 'Let us thro' yonder gate rush boldly forth,
 'And Alfred strive to slay, that only foe
 'Danes ever fear'd. Altho' our death be sure,
 'Yet shall this act, Death of his sting disarm.' 35

Guthrum exclaim'd ; 'Thou worthless counsellor !
 'Fly, or a speedier death shall light on *thee* !
 'As the last hour draws near, when we must quit
 'This state of war, would'st thou, at such a time, 40
 'Imbitter death, with this atrocious deed
 'Of cold unmanly murder ? If we fight,
 'Let the broad day-light see us ! Let us meet
 'The equal conflict, clashing sword with sword,
 'When the sun shines, and honest men can look, 45
 'Nor feel resentment.—All beyond is shame !
 'The midnight murd'rers spirits brave abhor !¹⁸⁷
 'Base Dane, away !

'But to prescribe our path,
 'That now befits us. Warriors ! ye who thus 50
 'Survive the fight, and stand around, with looks
 'All ghastly, from amazement yet alive,
 'Before I name my plans, and counsel you

'How now to act, I will, with shame, declare
 'Why we are here, and why the prospect casts 55
 'Darkness before us ; why we lost the day,
 'And now are left, wretched and hopeless men,
 'Whelm'd in disgrace.—It was our leaders' wrath !
 'Peace to their mem'ries ! 'twas their rancorous strife !
 'Which at the hour of battle, made them feel 60
 'Hate, for each other, rather than the foe.—
 'Low lie they both ! and of the Danish ranks,
 'Great in their numbers ! greater in their might !
 'We only live ! this little host, ordain'd
 'To suffer for their madness. Fruitless thus 65
 'To ponder on disasters, wiser far
 'To think how best to act.'

Debating now

With counsels opposite, the hours pass'd by,
 When one the spot approach'd and spake, 'Oh chief, 70
 'A Saxon claims to see thee !' 'Ope the gates !'
 Guthrum exclaim'd. 'Conduct him here ! Our hearts
 'Well may sustain his taunts.' Oddune drew near,
 And to the indignant Dane his speech address'd.

'I come, O, chief ! from Alfred our good king, 75
 'Instant to claim submission. Mark my words.
 'Go forth, and on his mercy trust for life !
 'So haply you may live.' To which the Dane :

'Herald, we spurn thy words ! Here are we safe,
 'A little moment. Never will we leave 80
 'These walls to die by Alfred, in some hour
 'Of scoffing merriment, or learn, too late,
 'Another Offa's treachery.¹⁸⁸ Saxon ! hence !
 'Talk not of mercy ! I too long have lived,
 'And known the human heart too well, to think 85
 'Mercy can sojourn in a victor's breast—
 'Where wrongs like ours have roused his appetite.

'If the robb'd she-wolf met thee in her course,
 'Say, would'st thou trust her mercy, or, confide
 'In thine own valour? Saxon, such will I! 90
 'Thy proffer we disdain! Vanquish'd we are,
 'Yet not subdued. Here will we perish all!
 'Fly swift and tell thy king our fix'd resolve.'

Oddune replied, 'Oh Dane, in Alfred trust!
 'Nor of his spirit judge thou by thine own. 95
 'He lives to shew mankind some conduct, high,
 'Beyond the common rule, and long will prove
 'Posterity's bright model. Well I know,
 'Our monarch boasts a heart, the which to trust,
 'E'en *thou* may'st venture.' 'Never!' cried the Dane, 100
 'Our oaths are pass'd, and like our gallant race,
 'Here will we stay!—defend this last retreat,
 'With courage of so bold and fierce a kind,
 'That even Alfred's self shall stand amazed,
 'And question his own sight. Now, Saxon, hear! 105

'It may not suit thy mode of thought, to learn
 'What Dane hath done; and thou may'st listen to me,
 'And at an old man smile. But I *must* speak!

'For three-score years hath Guthrum urged the fight,
 'Thro' kingdoms distant; oft with conquerors fierce, 110
 'With Frank and Saxon, and 'till this hard time
 'Never endured defeat! This trusty sword
 'Hath combated, 'till death itself denied
 'The further victim, Never have I slept
 'Beneath th' inglorious roof,¹⁸⁹ nor drunk my mead, 115
 'In base seclusion! I have met the war
 'Mid cliffs of ice, and mountains, white with frost,
 'Whilst we appear'd, 'mid the thick-falling flakes
 'And arrowy sleet, columns of stalking snow.
 'This heart hath dared all perils! I have oft 120

'Pillow'd my head upon the corse I slew
 'And heedless slept amid the war of winds !
 'Now doom'd to perish ! Not in honour's cause,
 'Not in the well-fought battle, but e'en here !
 'Here in this place, the mean inglorious death 125
 'Of slaves and traitors ! Yet, thy king inform,
 'Tho' die we must, brave will we die ! This gate
 'The last of Danes shall guard, and raise in death
 'With desperate vehemence, his feeble arm
 'To stay the Saxon's entrance. Hence ! and tell 130
 'All thou hast heard !

The Saxon chief replied,

'Prepare thine ear for tidings which will seem
 'Like some night vision. Know, courageous man,
 'Thy friend is Alfred ! He commission'd me 135
 'To bear the greetings of kind amity.
 'These were his words.—' I long to let him learn
 'How he is prized by one he little knows.
 'Bear this my *signet*, his security ;
 'Alike it shall ensure his life, his welfare.' 140
 'I give it thee. Thus further Alfred spake.
 'Declare, I laud and honour him. My word—
 'My oath is pass'd.—A king's solicitude
 'Shall shape new forms of gratitude, to serve
 'Such worth as his.' 145

'Cease !' Guthrum cried, enraged,
 'Falsehood is thine ! Thou art a treacherous man !
 'I scorn thy words ! thy craft ! thy subterfuge !
 'Didst thou believe, such idle words as thine
 'Could cheat old Guthrum ? What can Alfred prize 150
 'This heart for ? Plotting hourly for his fall ?
 'Thou dost exceed thy part, base as it is !
 'Thy king is now devising some deep plan
 'To win me from this fastness, but in vain !
 'Here will I fight and perish. Hence ! away ! 155
 'Thy monarch and thyself alike I spurn !'

Oddune replied, 'Thy words will I deliver.
 'Chieftain, there is a man in Alfred's camp,
 'Brave like thyself, whose wife thy captive is. 160
 'He pines to see her. Wilt thou freedom grant?'

Guthrum replied. 'I know for whom thou plead'st.
 'I prize, I love her, with such love alone
 'As the fond father feels.—My daughter, too, 165
 '*Loved her!*' The old man ceased. He wept!
 After a pause he cried.—'Thou hast declared
 'An honest man, her husband, who, full well,
 'Knows how to prize her; she shall be releas'd.
 'Unknowing of this fatal day's defeat, 170
 'In yonder tent she sits, silent as night!
 'Take her, and forth depart!'

Oddune withdrew,
 And now the tent had enter'd. Musing sad
 He saw a woman; on the earth her eye 175
 Intensely pored, heedless of coming foot.
 Her cheek was pale! When Oddune clasp'd his hands,
 And cried, 'Rejoice!'

As one who in the dark
 Sees, or believes he sees, some passing shape, 180
 And, starting, looks aghast; so at these words
Alswitha rose, and with astonishment,
 Half wild, exclaim'd, 'What art thou?' Oddune said,
 'I am indeed *thy* friend, and Alfred's friend!—
 'Oddune, well known.' 185

Not more astonished he
 Who at the world's remotest point, should view
 On some tall rock, in well-known characters,
 His name, distinct and clear, than felt the queen
 At these the chieftain's words. Doubting she cried, 190
 'Is it some baneful phantom, to involve
 'This heart in more inextricable grief?
 'Oh no! I know thee! Speak, or soon my mind

'Madness will seize?' 'Forbear thy doubts and fears!'

Oddune replied, (low bending to the ground.) 195

'I now can only tell thee, thou art free!

'And I am thy conductor. Hasten fast,

'Or danger yet may foliow!'

Up she rose.

A wild uncertainty hung o'er her brow; 200

Then, leaning on the mailed warrior's arm,

She pass'd the gate. When thus the queen exclaim'd:

'Is Alfred safe?' 'He is!' the chieftain cried;

'Alfred is safe! and Britain now is free!'

'Free!' cried Alswitha, 'What! Thou dreamest! Speak!'

Oddune replied, 'Britain indeed is free!

'Oh queen! behold'st thou yonder towering mound?

'Beneath it lie the Danes! Thousands are there!

'And 'mid the multitude, this day o'erthrown,

'Ivar and Hubba!' 210

'Tell me yet no more!'

Alswitha cried, 'My brain is hot! Oh God,

'Spare my weak intellect!' Again she spake,

'Where now is Alfred? Gallant chieftain, say;

'And Guthrum, where? Is *he* amid the slain? 215

'High heaven, I trust, hath spared that good old man!'

When Oddune; 'He is spared! In that same castle

'Whence thou art hast'ning, he abides, and vows

'To perish there, rather than to receive,

'Mercy from Alfred.' 220

'Hath he learned my name?'

Inquired the queen. 'If not, it may be well!'

'No!' answer'd Oddune. 'Little knew the Dane,

'*Who* was his captive. On th' opposing hill

'Alfred awaits, with heart-devouring care, 225

'To learn my message, and if yet thou liv'st

'To crown his happiness.' Alswitha cried,

'This is felicity! But where my child?'

Oddune distressful answer'd, 'Of thy child,
 'Nothing I know, tho' doubtless he is safe.' 230
 'Oh no!' replied the queen. 'He is not safe,
 'Save in a better world.'

The sudden tear

Bedew'd her eye, and silent they pass on :
 When calmly thus she spake. 'I would not mourn 235
 'At Heaven's all-wise disposal ; I have much
 'Calling for gratitude ; myself preserved ;
 'My better self in Alfred ; and the hope
 'That quietness may bless his future reign.
 'Farewell, my child ! Rebellious heart, be still !— 240
 'But are not these deceptions ? Am I safe ?
 'Is it no vain deceit of fairy land
 'Where all is happiness but, shadowy ? Chief !
 'Let me behold thee ! Truly thou dost look
 'Like faithful Oddune ! art thou truly he ?' 245
 'Truly,' replied the chief ! 'And thou art now
 'Queen of this lovely Isle, and long I trust
 'Ordain'd to grace its throne.' 'But say !' she cried,
 'How came these things, these changes wonderful ?
 'Which make my very being seem a dream, 250
 'And all my past conceptions, words and deeds,
 'Partaking of some insubstantial form
 'And link'd with very nothing.' Oddune forth,
 Declared of Ethelney, of Selwood's shade,
 Of Kenwith, of th' avenging flames that burnt 255
 The hostile fleet,¹⁹⁰ and of the Danish camp
 Which Alfred visited.

'Oh name it not !'

Cried the pale queen ! 'I saw thy monarch there,
 'The terror, the dismay, which thro' my frame, 260
 'Rush'd at that hour, fain would I blot from out
 'My burden'd mem'ry ! As we journey on
 'Complete thy story !' Oddune told the queen
 'Of the past fight.

Each circumstance she heard, 265
 Looking like one, who 'mid the charnel-house
 At dead of night doth roam, for penance due,
 Or, to relate to gaping auditors,
 What shapes were seen, all white and terrible,
 At the still hour, when fancy, unconfined, 270
 Sees clearer for the darkness, and beholds,
 Each soul-o'erwhelming spectacle, when ghosts
 Have their night revels.

Thro' the vale they pass'd,
 Communing thus, and now they see the tent 275
 Where Alfred anxious waited. Oddune spake,
 'I would draw nigh the king, if seem thee fit,
 'And first address him, lest the sudden gust
 'Of rapture, half o'erpower his labouring mind.'
 'Depart!' replied the queen. 'I at the door 280
 'Will wait thy signal.'

Oddune reach'd the tent.
 He enter'd. At his sight the king uprose,
 Then, starting back, exclaim'd, 'Oddune, no queen!
 'I fear to ask thee! yet, thou may'st proceed! 285
 'I *think* I can endure to hear thy tale!
 Oddune began. 'First will I name, O king!
 'Of Guthrum. He disdains thy words, and swears
 'To perish in yon castle.' Alfred cried,
 'What tidings of Alswitha? now declare! 290
 'Yet, stay awhile! I cannot bear it yet!—
 'Speak on!' when Oddune thus:

'I ask'd the Dane
 'Of one, his captive; claim'd her liberty.
 'Take her!' the chieftain cried. 'She yonder dwells!' 295
 'I found her! brought her safe! and now she waits,
 'Monarch, at thy tent door!'

Alswitha heard,
 And instant enter'd! To the king she rush'd!
 Alfred beheld her! In each other's arms, 300

Speechless they stand ! It was the moment full
Of holy feeling, when the spirit drinks—
Deep of the soul's full harmony, and spurns
The intermediate office of vain words.

When, after solemn pause, Alfred exclaim'd. 305

'Belov'd Alswitha ! God of heaven inspire,

'This heart with everlasting gratitude !'

The queen essay'd to speak ; she only wept !

Their tears are mingled ; when, at length, the king,

'But I must hear thy tale. Where hast thou been ?' 310

'What further hast thou suffer'd ? best beloved !

'What ills endured, that I know nothing of ?'

'Alswitha check'd the tear that would have flow'd ;

When thus she answered, dignified, yet mild,

Looking attention : 'As I told thee once, . 315

(Through the mysterious concords of the *harp*.)

'If e'er thou saw'st me living, thou should'st find,

'My soul still pure ! Before my gracious Lord,

'Such do I stand ! and thou art still the same,

'Sole inmate, and sole idol of my heart.' 320

Alfred exclaim'd, leaning on her he loved,

'Saints envy not, or they might think of me !

'Now will I hear thee. Yet, awhile, forbear.

'Distraction must not haunt me, while thy tale

'Mellifluous flows. Important calls are mine. 325

'Erelong, and I will listen and admire.'

Which said, the monarch with the chief retired.

ALFRED :

BOOK XXI.

ARGUMENT.

Alswitha relates the events which had happened to her since she separated from Alfred.

ALFRED and Oddune from the neighbouring camp,
Now had return'd. They hasten to the queen,
Impatient the suspended tale to hear.
With eye suffused, Alswitha thus began :

‘ My lord ! my husband ! thou for whom my heart 5
‘ Its keenest pangs hath felt, I need not say
‘ What joy this hour affords me, from the change
‘ High Heaven hath wrought. Oh Alfred ! Oh my lord !
‘ Great is God’s mercy ! He hath veil’d himself
‘ But to shine forth more glorious ; He hath frown’d, 10
‘ And for a little moment hid his face,
‘ To try the heart he loved, and purify
‘ By ills and crosses ;—Wisdom’s ministers !

‘ Thou askest me to name the varied scenes,
‘ This heart hath known, since, ’mid the abbey walls, 15
‘ We cried farewell. These scenes, had I the power,
‘ Should with oblivion dwell, and every shade

‘Of past remembrance die away, no more
 ‘To rouse my dormant soul. Yet thou hast ask’d,
 ‘And I will tell thee, tho’ it cost me dear. 20

‘But three long days after thou bad’st adieu,
 ‘We from the abbey turrets spied the Danes,
 ‘Fierce coming on. A sight that fill’d our hearts
 ‘With dread forebodings, each, with terror pale. 25
 ‘At length they reach’d the walls! Their hideous yells
 ‘Rose like the wintry ravings on our ear!
 ‘Their torches flash’d! Their blows the ponderous gates
 ‘Answered with deaf’ning roar! Each look’d to God.
 ‘The abbot was a christian, good and true, 30
 ‘And when thou wentest, often talk’d of thee,
 ‘And prais’d thy words, and loved thy smiling boy;
 ‘And when he saw the wasting Danes draw nigh,
 ‘He trembled.’ ‘Hear,’ he cried, ‘that noise! The gates
 ‘Long may not stand! Haste! haste! he trembling cried! 35
 ‘(Turning to me) and fled—he knew not where;
 ‘I follow’d, tho’ in that distracting hour,
 ‘Within my palsied heart there was no fear;
 ‘I did not think of thee; my babe forgot;
 ‘For with excess of feeling, feeling fled; 40
 ‘I seem’d a stone become! But from this dream
 ‘Fresh groans awaked me! for the doors were forced!
 ‘The wrathful Danes, throughout the place, spread death!

‘Now, could I hear the miserable cry, 45
 ‘Of mercy! mercy! In the abbot’s face
 ‘I saw despair. He said, ‘Give *me* the child!’
 ‘Resolved to fly—not knowing how, or where!
 ‘The abbot answer’d, Woman, follow me!
 ‘Not certain, yet, is death!—but hark!—the noise! 50
 ‘The flames, they rage! when instant I beheld
 ‘Columns of smoke ascending up to heaven,
 ‘Now ceasing, rising now in vaster curls,

'Thro' which the fire in fitful fury burst,
 'Whilst higher still, amid night premature, 55
 'Sparks shone, with fearful lustre, that appear'd,
 'E'en in mid-day, a starry firmament.
 'We saw hope gone ! I think the abbot said,
 'Oh God, thou yet art great ! Vouchsafe thine aid !
 'Oh God, deliver us !' Which having said, 60
 'He rush'd across the court—I follow'd him !
 'We reach'd the utmost wall. High heaven inspir'd,
 'Our limbs with strength miraculous ; and soon
 'Its height we climb'd, 'mid smoke, and the loud cry
 'Of death around us. Down the abbot leap'd ! 65
 'He had my child ! I follow'd. Down I leap'd.
 'When to the earth I came, I look'd around
 'For child or guide, all was one waste of smoke !
 'Forward I urged my footsteps, but in vain :
 'Yet still I ran, fleet as the bounding roe, 70
 'For Hope still whisper'd 'further was my child !'
 'Still on I sped.—I never saw him more !
 'My child he had !—A silence mark'd the air.
 After a tremulous sigh, the queen again.
 'Distracting thought ! my treasure he possess'd ! 75
 'The Danish sword, that spares not infancy,—
 'More than the hoary head, hath sent to death
 'That good old man, and with him !—silence reign'd !
 The tears fell fast ! (The king his speech restrain'd !
 He fear'd to speak !)—Alswitha thus again. 80
 'Our child, Oh, Alfred ! our delight is flown !
 'Adieu, sweet babe !—A long, a last adieu !—
 (The king prepared to speak, but check'd himself.)

Alswitha thus pursued.—'Some trees I sought,
 'And from the thicket, cautious look'd around. 85
 'When o'er the plain the fierce wind swept along,
 'And for a moment made all clear, I saw—
 'Ruin behind me, one vast heap of fire !

‘And tho’ far distant, yet upon the gale,
 ‘Surly, that pass’d along, I could perceive 90
 ‘The voice of dying man, faint but most clear,
 ‘That made my feverish and tumultuous heart,
 ‘Throb audibly. I thus escaped myself.
 ‘Thankful I stood; but yet no child was near!

‘Oh, what the hopes and fears a mother feels! 95
 ‘Her offspring now, in all its innocence
 ‘And playful gaiety, delights the eye,
 ‘While in her bounding heart, spontaneous, rise
 ‘Sweet feelings; and she looks around and smiles,
 ‘O’erflowing with delight, as all she saw 100
 ‘Were one serene, immeasurable sea
 ‘Of living pleasure! She extends her eye,
 ‘Through distant times, and sees her child arise,
 ‘To fame, and worth, and honour, paying well
 ‘Parental care,—’till, in one fatal hour, 105
 ‘Death visits him, and night o’ercasts the scene!
 ‘Yet God is wise, nor would we rob our child
 ‘Of Heaven’s felicities,—still wish him here
 ‘To combat, like ourselves, with toil and woe.
 ‘His haven, storms assail not, and ere long 110
 ‘Borne on fleet pinion, in a better world,
 ‘The weeping and the wept will meet again.
 ‘I would forget my child.—Sweet babe, adieu!

‘Whilst thus I stood, appearing, to myself,
 ‘Of Heaven and earth deserted, through my mind, 115
 ‘As tho’ by power miraculous, I felt
 ‘A sudden and mysterious placidness,
 ‘That made me feel, like some unbodied spirit
 ‘When he looks down upon his earthly friends,
 ‘And marks their sorrow, yet, beholding, knows, 120
 ‘How vain their pity, and how better far
 ‘His change,—of Earth for Heaven: e’en thus I felt;

'And, tranquil, journey'd on, tho' wistless where,
 'For still I knew there was a God on high.
 'Now to the skirts of a dark wood I came. 125
 'Twas night. Upon the ground I lay and slept.
 'Yes, on the ground, the heavens my canopy,
 'And a protecting Providence my trust.
 'Ere morn appear'd I rose, and travelled on,
 'Still vainly seeking thee, on whom my heart 130
 'Lean'd as its earthly stay. The days pass'd by,
 'And yet I wander'd. Food I oft obtain'd
 'From bush or bramble, but, the craving pang
 'Of nature now increas'd, and the sad thought
 'Seem'd cheering, that my earthly end drew near! 135
 'But then I thought of thee! I yet would live,
 'Cried I; 'Almighty Father, spare my life!'

'Surveying a near valley, I espied,
 'What once had been an abbey, mould'ring now : 140
 'The which I sought, and desolation deem'd
 'My best security from wandering Danes.
 'I enter'd. Dreary look'd the scene around!
 'The heavens were still, and I could only hear
 'The distant night-bird; such the solemn hush 145
 'All things invested. Now the moon appear'd.
 'As thus I shivering stood, methought I heard
 'Footstep approaching! when I saw a man—
 'The dark porch enter, slow, and pass the niche,
 'Close where I stood. I fled! he followed me, 150
 'Crying, Who art thou? when I thus replied :
 'Pity the wretched! Art thou one of us?
 'A Saxon?' 'Yea!' the warrior cried, 'I am!
 'A servant liege of Alfred our good king,
 'Who, God be prais'd! is safe.' This gave a joy, 155
 'Such as no words may name. He then inquired,
 'Fervent and often, how I thither came;
 'And if, of Alfred's queen, I aught had heard,

' For that his king believed that she was dead,
 ' Murder'd in Glastonbury. I replied, 160
 ' (Wishing to hide my name, yet meet with thee)
 ' Some rumour I had heard that yet she lived,
 ' But that to thee alone, I more would say.
 ' As now thy face we sought, if e'er I vow'd,
 ' Earnest, to God, it was from that good hour. 165
 ' If ere we met, in this bleak world of ours,
 ' To part with life, rather than part with thee.'

Alfred exclaim'd, ' And truly didst thou vow !
 ' This is that hour of meeting ! We are hence,
 ' If Heaven approve, never to part till death.' 170
 A smile of meaning, sent from heart to heart,
 Was the Queen's answer. When again she spake.

' Whilst thus I journey'd, fill'd with the high hope
 ' Of seeing thee, on the wide plain, I spied
 ' A roving band of Danes. They hasten'd near ! 176
 ' Seized was Alswitha ! Now must I declare
 ' Something of Guthrum ; something of that Dane
 ' Who made me thus a captive, and 'till now
 ' In bondage held.

' One lesson have I learn'd, 180.
 ' Since last I saw thee, Alfred ! well to know—
 ' That sometimes, 'mid th' unpromising, the eye
 ' Fixes on one, who, from some innate cause,
 ' Some secret principle, rises above
 ' The virtues of his station. Hath not Heaven 185
 ' This mystery appointed, to instruct
 ' Contracted mortals, that within one spot,
 ' All goodness cent'reth not ? That different tribes,
 ' Scatter'd, or East, or West, contains some good,
 ' (For all the purposes of social life) 195
 ' Some excellence,—virtues of rarest kind,
 ' By little minds unthought of, who would fain

' Make for themselves alone, the good sun shine !
 ' Guthrum the Dane, whose captive I became,
 ' Was this surpassing man ! Though nurs'd in wars, 200
 ' And with the harden'd, nurtured, him I found
 ' Firm to his oath ? Inflexible as truth !
 ' Just to his fancied duties !

' In the camp,
 ' Following her father, one, his daughter, dwelt ; 205
 ' Anxious, in all extremes her sire to serve ;
 ' And, wonder, Alfred ; when to thee I tell,
 ' How good she was, worthy of such a sire.
 ' To her I owe full many comforts, hours, 210
 ' Of something like contentment, for I talk'd
 ' To her and Guthrum, of th' Eternal Power
 ' That dwelt on high, who made the glorious sun—
 ' This wond'rous world, and all created things,
 ' And of that Sacrifice, the hope of man ! 215

' They listen'd to me, and they seem'd to love
 ' The words I spake : but when I check'd his wrath,
 ' And told, of that forgiveness God required
 ' From man to man, he cried, ' It cannot be !
 ' Forgiveness didst thou say ? Forgive a foe ! 220
 ' The injured pardon ! 'Tis not in man's heart !
 ' And never will I deem it possible
 ' Till for myself I see what thou hast said !
 ' A christian taught to love and to forgive !
 ' Pass over wrongs ! and for the evil thing, 225
 ' Return the good ! Tell to credulity
 ' This tale, I heed it not !' Enough, to say,
 ' I found his mind, fired with wild prejudice,
 ' Yet true to that small ray of mental light,
 ' Heaven hath vouchsafed. 230

' At Kenwith's massy walls
 ' We now arrived, where noble Oddune lay,
 ' The man, whom, next to thee, Danes most abhorr'd.

I mourn'd his fate.

- ‘There is a tale most sad! 235
 ‘To this my breast, the thought such terror brings,
 ‘And will in thine such tumult work, that I
 ‘Fain would forget it, for myself and thee :
 ‘Yet innocence fears nothing but the word
 ‘Whisper’d in secret! Hubba, that foul Dane ! 240
 ‘Beheld Alswitha ! More I cannot say ;
 ‘But that to Guthrum, yonder foe, thou ow’st,
 ‘That, spotless, yea, that living here I stand.
 ‘My foe was Hubba, fierce, from that dread hour.
 ‘How for my blood he sought, full well thou know’st.’ 245

The pallid cheek, the palpitating heart
 Told Alfred’s conflict. Thus the queen again.
 ‘Yes, thank that Dane, who yet survives the fight,
 ‘Guthrum, for he, with that high mind which shows
 ‘The soul’s nobility, exclaim’d, ‘Oh chief ! 250
 ‘This heart hath sworn, ’till death itself draw near,
 ‘Yon captive to protect, and, by this sword !
 ‘Safe shall she be.’—

- ‘It were a mournful task,
 ‘To name their boisterous strife. A part thou heard’st. 255
 ‘Often must thou have ponder’d on the thought,
 ‘Why chieftains, like the Danes, should thus forget
 ‘Their common cause, and in contentious broils
 ‘Spend their best hours. This is that secret, deep !
 ‘Hubba forgot all wrath, but wrath for one 260
 ‘Who ne’er offended him ’ At such an hour,
 ‘Amid the hostile camp, (thy foes around,)
 ‘Thou mettest me, Oh Alfred ! and to think,
 ‘The pangs that then I felt, but possible,
 ‘Me to o’ertake again, chiefly for thee, 265
 ‘Upon my poor distemper’d head would bring
 ‘Sudden distraction !

‘When thou fled’st the camp,

' Strange consternation seized the Danes ! They ask'd,
 ' Earnest for thee, the harper, and awhile 270
 ' Thought thee to air dissolved, or sudden changed
 ' To some, thy proper shape ; for they believed
 ' Thou wert some deity. When one drew near,
 ' Saying, At dead of night, whilst the wind howl'd,
 ' Thou passedst through the gate, to the near shore ¹⁹¹ 275
 ' To bathe in ocean. Hubba cried aloud
 ' Truly that man was Lok, for he hath used
 ' To change his form, and through the ocean waves
 ' Dart rapid. ¹⁹² From the moment him I saw,
 ' I knew the God ! ' With this belief they lost 280
 ' Thoughts of pursuit, and for the coming fight
 ' Made ready, vowing to their idols vile,
 ' To offer *thee*, Oh Alfred ! yea they swore,
 ' The Saxon's reign was short ; all dread and death,
 ' For thee and thine, as was to-morrow's dawn,— 285
 ' Certain. I deem'd it true ! and felt within,
 ' Cold as the heart where Hope's sun never shines.

' The Danes had vow'd in solemn rites, to spend
 ' Nine days for their success ; when Ivar cried,
 ' Impatient of restraint, panting for war, 290
 ' What tho' three days of unexpired mirth
 ' Demand our stay, why should we waste our time ?
 ' Is not the Saxon king now gathering strength ?
 ' To-morrow we will hence depart ! Our vows
 ' Hereafter will we keep, this hour demands 295
 ' Dependence on our own unconquer'd swords.'
 Hubba exclaim'd, ' Abhorrent thought ! That deed,
 ' Impious, forbear ! Yet, if thou wilt depart,
 ' Shrink not from slaughter ! glut thy sword with blood !
 ' Nor let one Saxon live to tell the tale 300
 ' Of that day's battle, when we next shall meet ;
 ' For, by the eternal gods, each man shall die !'
 ' What force was thine, I knew not, and I fear'd,—

‘ A night of horrors, more intensely dark,
 ‘ Than ever yet involved our native land, 305
 ‘ Was gathering fast.

‘ The Danes now eager march’d
 ‘ Thee to o’ertake ; and I too follow’d them,
 ‘ With Guthrum’s daughter, who, in all my cares,
 ‘ A sister’s interest bore. But more of this— 310
 ‘ Hereafter. To yon castle now we came,
 ‘ When, feeling so o’erpower’d my harass’d mind
 ‘ That I became insensible ; my soul,
 ‘ Of past existence lost all traces, sounds
 ‘ Fell heedless on my ear, and to the world 315
 ‘ Dead I became, How long entranced I sat,
 ‘ I cannot answer, when, behind I heard
 ‘ Some voice exclaim, ‘ Rejoice !’ ‘ I turn’d and saw
 ‘ Brave Oddune ! when, in frenzied state, I cried,
 ‘ What man art thou ? 320

‘ The rest, thou knowest well.
 ‘ That here I stand, Oh God, behold my heart !
 ‘ And if it be not grateful, make it such !
 ‘ Now would I speak of thee. For all thy cares,
 ‘ Thy dangers and dismays, while yet I bore 325
 ‘ Captivity, sorrow consumed my frame,
 ‘ And I forgot myself with fears for thee.
 ‘ But thou art safe ! Henceforth shalt thou enjoy
 ‘ Good days and many ! I will strive to wean
 ‘ Thy mind from past misfortunes ! Joy shall now 330
 ‘ Bless thee the more, and thou shalt find sincere—
 ‘ Alswitha’s love, my husband, and my lord !’

Alfred transported rose, and eager cried,
 ‘ Soother of every care ! Best gift of heaven !
 ‘ Companion ! Friend ! Instructor ! What so soft 335
 ‘ As the mild tone that from affection springs—
 ‘ So lovely, as the human eye, that beams
 ‘ True tenderness ? Favor’d of mortal kind,

'Who'er thou be, that in this world hast found
 'The heart of friendship, give to Heaven thy praise! 340
 'But if that friend, the nearest of all names,
 'A wife's should bear, think thyself bless'd indeed!
 'For thou hast found, 'mid this inclement world,
 'In all that touches the interior man,
 'A refuge from its storms, a nobler prize 345
 'Than crowns and diadems!'

Alswitha cried,

Whilst tears of joyance glisten'd in her eye,
 'Thou hast my gratitude! But, good my lord,
 'Pardon the word that might disturb thy mind, 350
 'With dreadful recollections. Whilst we stand,
 'And praise our Maker, for the aid vouchsafed
 'To us his servants, I would hope, no crime
 'Seems it to him, to cast one lingering thought
 'On those no more, and o'er their memory drop 355
 'Nature's fond tear. Oh Alfred! thou and I
 'Still must remember, with deep agony,
 'One loss! our child! that on that fatal day
 'Made us for ever wretched.' O'er her face
 She cast her hand in silence. When the king— 360
 Rose, and thus spake. 'Alswitha! I do fear
 'To tell thy happiness.' The queen exclaim'd,
 'What words were those? Declare! Is my child safe?
 'Sport not with death!'

Alfred replied, 'He is! 365

'Thy child is safe!' After a moment's pause,
 Alswitha calmly said, '*This* can I bear!
 'Great sorrows, and great joys, alike are link'd
 'To dreaminess!' The flood of feeling came!
 Earnest she cried, 'Is my child safe? Oh God! 370
 'Father of Heaven and earth, spare my weak head!
 'Drive me not crazy through the earth! Allay
 'This throbbing of my bosom! Didst thou say
 'My child was safe? Where is he? Bring him *to me*!

‘Thou tent disclose him!’

375

Alfred cried, ‘Belov’d!

‘Oh stay thy anguish! Check the vehemence

‘Of these thy warm affections! Soon, full soon,

‘Thou shalt behold thy child! Thou shalt embrace,

‘Upon the coming day, thy darling boy!

380

‘He hastens from a lowly dwelling near.’

By transport overpowered, the queen awhile
Stood silent. When the king to Oddune spake.

‘This wondrous tale, Alswitha’s, thou hast heard,

‘And doubtless didst anticipate the words

385

‘Which now I speak. Guthrum, the Danish chief,

‘Hence is my choicest friend! fix’d, permanent,

‘Stable as life. Haste to the castle; say,

‘He needs not dread thy monarch! With apt words,

‘Root out his many fears! and let him know,

390

‘If ever in man’s heart fidelity

‘An entrance found, he may in Alfred trust;—

‘As steadfast as the earth he treads upon!

‘Now seek the chieftain.’

When, Alswitha thus.

395

‘Oddune! one favour mine. Inquire for her,—

‘Guthrum’s fair daughter. This my heart doth yearn

‘To show the damsel kindness. If thou canst,

‘Oh! bear her to this bosom!’—Oddune heard,

And bending left the presence of the king.

A L F R E D :

BOOK XXII.

ARGUMENT.

Oddune again visits Guthrum, and persuades him to submit to Alfred—He consents to see the king—Alfred receives him at first with assumed anger—Alswitha pleads for Guthrum, who is pardoned—Guthrum intreats to become a christian, and ascribes his conversion to Alswitha—He deplores the supposed death of his daughter—She presents herself to him—The Danish chief and his daughter depart to the castle—Oddune commended by Alswitha.

JOY at his heart, Oddune now seeks the Dane ;
And as the castle hall he entered, stern,
Guthrum approach'd and cried, 'Thou busy foe !
'What seek'st thou now ? May we not perish here,
'Safe from thy visits, and at least enjoy 5
'Peace in our final moments ? Haste thou back !
'I hate thy converse ! 'Tis to me more foul
'Than screams to drowsiness ! Proud Saxon ! Life,
'We know its limits ! and, that soon these eyes
'Closed will be found ! yet think not thou to gain 10
'On easy terms this castle ! We are Danes !
'And till the hungry crows look down upon us,
'And think us food for them, so thin and wan,
'As on our walls we stand, hurling on you
'The dart and jav'lin, never shall you tread 15
'This one last spot triumphant.'

Oddune cried,

'I come not now with threats, but promises,
'In patience, hear my words !'

The Dane exclaim'd, 20

'I hear thee not ! Would'st thou attempt to soothe
'The bear with promises, when he beholds
'The hunters round him ? neither *me* beguile !
'My path is plain ! Death will anon be ours !
'But 'till it come, we will aspire to live 25
'Worthy of death.'

Oddune, more earnest cried,

'I do not bring thee death, but rather life—
'For thee and thine. These are the words I bear.
'Submit to Alfred ! On his mercy lean ! 30
'For he is one who harbours not revenge
'And hate remorseless. Trust his clemency,
'And thou shalt find thy apprehensions vain,
'Thy every fear unfounded.'

Cried the Dane. 35

'Thou see'st me thus thy prey, but do not add
'Insult, where courage may not show itself !
'Dost thou suspect of *fear* ? I know it not !
'And didst thou think this heart would mercy crave—
'From this thy monarch ? Never shall the sun 40
'See Guthrum crouch before the victor's frown
'And ask him pardon !'

Oddune spake, 'Thy doubts,

'Thy apprehensions, call them what thou wilt,
'Are most unreal. Alfred boasts a heart 45
'That never felt contempt for any man !
'Approach our king, and he will grant thee life.'

The Dane replied, 'Talk not of asking life !

'Chieftain ! its charms are pass'd. I spurn the boon ! 50
'My child is *slain* ! my honour flown ! and now
'Wherefore should I, a Dane, desire to live ?'

Oddune replied, 'Let not ideal mists
 'Before thee float; and prejudice, that great,
 'That mightier mist than all, quenching the mind ! 55
 'Thou lovest not thy life! and fain would'st boast
 'Of yielding the small boon, untterrified;
 'Prized but by cowards! Let me ask thee, Dane!
 'Not thy proud heart, but that which seldom errs,
 'Thy quiet feelings, why thou lovest death? 60

'Is it some little thing to breathe the air,
 'To see the light of Heaven, the glorious sun,
 'The azure firmament? this beauteous world
 'Of comforts and of wonders infinite?
 'Is it some little thing, at early morn, 65
 'To feel the freshness of the gale, that comes
 'Replenish'd with its vivifying powers?—
 'A senseless joy, an idle benefit,
 'To wander in the balmy summer morn;
 'Thro' fields and flowers, drinking the vital air, 70
 'With fragrance and with odoriferous scents
 'O'erflowing, rousing up the soul to dreams
 'Of immaterial joy, and dim regards
 'Of a sweet something, undefined, yet clear
 'In the soul's confidence, sometime to come? 75
 'And is it nothing deem'd, to taste the grape,
 'Nature's sweet bev'rage! or, the cheering mead?
 'Nothing to view the fruits that charm the eye,
 'And please the taste, scatter'd thro' every clime,
 'All nations blessing?— 80

'Were our ears bestow'd
 'To feel disgust, and in our minds excite
 'Perpetual jarrings? Can we wander forth
 'And hear the wild-wood music, birds and things
 'Yielding their minstrelsy in soothing notes 85.
 'Or soul-inspiring, and all choristers
 'Sounding their Maker's praise? Can this our world,

' Its wonders infinite, no joyance yield ?
 ' No comfort ? and no promise give the soul
 ' That should delay its wanderings, and inspire 90
 ' One wish to linger 'mid a scene so fair ?
 ' And is there nothing in that foe to man,
 ' Death ! that affrights thee ? Canst thou think, unmov'd,
 ' That this thy frame, shortly beneath the ground
 ' Will moulder slow ? That these thy comely limbs 95
 ' Which now support the fabric thou hast long
 ' Pamper'd and call'd thyself, will soon supply
 ' The earth-worm's banquet ? Yields it no dismay,
 ' No creeping of the flesh, to think that these
 ' Soon must relax, and all, which once was thou, 100
 ' Sink in the grave's long quiet ? Rouse thyself !
 ' Let me conduct thee hence ! In Alfred trust !
 ' Here death *must* meet thee, *there* is safety found.'

Guthrum replied, ' Myself I thought I knew,
 ' And my resolves could trust ; but, these thy words, 105
 ' Probe deep my heart, and to my view display
 ' Thoughts veil'd before. I never yet have fear'd
 ' Death in his fiercest garb ; but thro' my mind
 ' A secret dread now passes : these thy words
 ' Have dimm'd my understanding, so unhing'd 110
 ' For calm decision, and I seem to wish
 ' Longer to live. But, hear I not a voice !
 ' Honour's ! His look is stern ! his law severe !
 ' How shall I soothe him ? To whom thus the chief :

' Brave Dane ! true honour lies not with the man 115
 ' Who scorns all dangers, and would rather tear
 ' His heart asunder, and to savage beasts
 ' Cast it, than stoop to that high influence,
 ' Which governs all men. Thou hast bravely fought !
 ' Now bravely bear ! not by thus scorning life 120
 ' With rude and brutal rage, but, by the faith

'Thou placest in another, which best shows
 'What might be placed in thee. Alfred, our king,
 'No unforgiven injury e'er hath felt.
 'Trust him, and live! His worth thou knowest not, 125
 'Nor how he prizes valour such as thine.
 'I bore to thee his signet, that includes
 'A pledge, an oath,—all veritable things!—
 'Firm as earth's pillars! Dane, in me confide!'

'I trust thee not!' cried Guthrum. 'Alfred pardon! 130
 'Pardon such wrongs as his? Vain thought, away!
 'It cannot be!—I think it cannot be.
 'It cannot be!—Yet the experiment
 'No hard essay.—Where are my senses flown?
 'Thy words and hers, whom blessings ever follow! 135
 'So scatter and confound my thoughts, that I—
 'Tremble, and fain would live.'—'What thou hast said
 'Of Alfred's clemency shall now be tried;
 'But if it fail, the penalty? Away!
 'I will attend thee! chieftain, point the way! 140
 'By the first look of Alfred, I may judge
 'Of these thy words, whether I live or die.
 'Now will I seek the Danish troops, and name
 'Guthrum's design.'

He seeks them. Thus he spake, 145
 'Danes! here we stand, cut off from aid, and doom'd
 'To perish in this dark and evil hour.
 'Why should the waster death so charm our hearts?
 'So blind our eyes to all that cheers the soul,
 'And animates? If honour we may save, 150
 'And save our lives, is it not well?—for what—
 'Is there in death that living man should prize,
 'When keeping life with honour? Wessex' king
 'Hath sent yon chieftain hither, to demand
 'Submission, and hath promis'd well and true 155
 'To grant forgiveness. To my mind it seems

' Impossible for one so wrong'd, to seek
 ' Aught but our blood ; this Saxon tells us nay ;
 ' And speaks, full confident, that if we stoop,
 ' Shorn as we are, to one, our bravest foe ! 160
 ' We yet may live.—

' I will alone repair
 ' To yonder camp, and with the Saxon king,
 ' Treat for your safety. Vent'rous the design !
 ' If I return not with convenient speed 165
 ' Conclude me dead ! Then, worthy of your race,
 ' Fight manfully ; and if you all must die,
 ' Die like yourselves !—Guthrum, unterrified
 ' Leaves you to make this perilous attempt.'

He said, whilst words of dubious import came 170
 From those around him, not of joy or hope,
 But from despair, that still had consciousness
 Of its own state, to know it was despair.

The Chieftain now, with Oddune, fearlessly
 Pass'd thro' the archway, whilst all mark'd them sad, 175
 Tho' not a voice was heard, nor sound, save one,
 The rustling wind, that' mid the turrets play'd ;
 Making each heart—sick with its hollow moan.

Whilst journeying on, to Guthrum, Oddune thus :
 ' Hadst thou not once, good Dane ! a daughter, one 180
 ' Known to thy female captive ? ' I had *once* ! '
 Answered the Dane. ' Now pray thee, ask no more,
 ' Upon my wrongs, I think. Words suit not me.'—
 And now they reach'd the Saxon camp, when thus
 Oddune address'd the Dane. ' I, first, will seek 185
 ' Alfred, then lead thee to his presence near.'

Oddune now sought his monarch's tent, where sat
 The King, the Queen, with one, a damsel fair.

When Alfred cried, ' Good Oddune, instant say,
 ' Where is brave Guthrum ? Have thy words prevail'd 190
 To draw him hither ?'

Oddune cried, ' O, king !

' At a convenient distance, fill'd with doubt,
 ' The warrior waits !' When Alfred rose and spake,
 ' Since thou departedst to the neighbouring fort, 195
 ' Within our camp, yon maiden hath arrived,
 ' Guthrum's fair daughter. As to meet our force
 ' The Danes proceeded, from her safe abode
 ' She ventured, by affection urged, to mark
 ' How fared her father ; hoping, if in battle 200
 ' Her sire should fall, or wounds, or sore mishap
 ' Light on him, filial care and tenderness
 ' Might soothe his pain, and win him back to life.
 ' When, yielding to the valour of our arms,
 ' The Danes fled, vanquish'd—Havoc in their train, 205
 ' She, with the routed army 'scaped, nor where—
 ' Heeding : her thoughts were wild. Our forces met.
 ' And here conducted her. Behold her now,
 ' Lov'd by the queen, whom she so oft has served.'
 When turning to Alswitha, thus he spake. 210

' Take now thy diadem. Assume the robe
 ' Befitting royalty. The same will I.
 ' Then let the Danish maiden screen herself.
 ' I will assume the monarch ;—seem to chide,—
 ' Haply to hide remembrance of the hour— 215
 ' When I, a harper, sought the Danish camp.
 ' Oddune conceal our thoughts. When thus prepared,
 ' Lead Guthrum hither.'—Now the royal pair
 Sit in due state ; when Oddune left the tent,
 And soon return'd, guiding the ancient Dane. 220

When first he enter'd, Alfred cried, ' Declare !
 ' What think'st thou is the punishment deserved

‘For crimes like thine?’ These words the chief confirmed
 In dreadful expectations. He replied,
 ‘No punishment! My crime is that alone 225
 ‘Of warrior vanquished!’

Alfred cried, ‘Approach!

‘Let me behold thee!’ Guthrum nearer draws:
 When Alfred thus: ‘Thy triumph now is o’er!
 ‘Thy power is flown! yet, wilt thou hence confess 230
 ‘Me, thy liege lord?’ ‘Never!’ replied the Dane.
 ‘Within thine eye I see deep vengeance sit,
 ‘And wrath that seals my ruin! I am wrong’d.
 ‘Falsehood and treachery have lured me here!
 ‘In vain they shake my spirit! Let me die!’ 235
 Eager he cried. ‘One blow, and I am past
 ‘Thy hatred, and my own consuming shame.’

He said, and instant drawing near the king,
 Laid bare his breast. When, looking up,—he knew—
 The *Harper’s* visage! Sudden dropt his arm! 240
 His cheek from crimson to a deadly white
 Turn’d, and he shiver’d. Every tongue was mute,
 And every eye fix’d on the wondering Dane.
 When Guthrum thus exclaim’d, looking so wild,
 That madness seeing him, again might start— 245
 Itself to reason.

‘Certain, now is death!

‘Each moment is new torment! To survive
 ‘Blasts my last hope!’ Alswitha cried aloud,
 ‘Guthrum! thou shalt not die!’ (and hastening stood— 250
 Before the trembling Dane.) ‘Thou shalt not die!
 ‘Brave chieftain! I am grateful; thou art good,
 ‘And shalt be happy.’ At these words, the Dane—
 Look’d up and saw—his *Captive*! Wilder still
 Roll’d his full eyes! Confused conceptions rose 255
 Wildering his soul! When eager thus he spake.
 ‘Who art thou?’ Gazing at the queen, she thus.

'I am thy Captive, whom thou oft hast saved
 'When death drew near, and I will now, *my* hand—
 'Stretch out for thee! Pardon this Dane, Oh king! 260
 'A nobler and more estimable man
 'Lives not to share thy favour!' Alfred heard,
 And drawing near the wondering Dane, exclaim'd,
 'Guthrum! accept thy life, and with it, too,
 'Brave man! my gratitude.' Thou art my friend, 365
 'And Alfred's choicest gifts shall hence be thine.'
 At words and scenes so strange, wild look'd the Dane;
 With wistful eye; unknowing, if the things
 Were real, or, the baseless fantasies
 That float before the mind, at the dim hour 370
 When dreams perplex it. Round the tent again,
 He look'd to satisfy his doubting mind:
 Then at the king, the queen. When Alfred spake:

'Chieftain, dismiss thy doubts! No fancied scene
 'Now lies before thee. This the Saxon queen, 375
 'And I am Alfred! I the Harper am,
 'Whose harp thou savedst in the Danish camp.
 'Nor doubt thy sight! for she whom thou behold'st,
 'Truly thy captive was! whom, but for thee, .
 'Hubba had sacrificed, and I been found, 380
 'A lonely, friendless, miserable man!
 'I know thy character! I know thy heart!
 'And prize thee, but hereafter hope to prize,
 'Doubly, when better known. Behold in me,
 'Thy true and constant friend! 385

'This is too much!

Guthrum exclaim'd. 'Man's mind was never form'd
 'To bear such conflicts! Didst thou say forgive?
 'Call me thy friend! Say life was mine! Nor yet,
 'I cannot trust my senses! Is it so?' 390
 Alfred replied, 'Brave Dane! my oath is pass'd.
 'Now, *of* me, ask some favour! Be it great!

‘Thou need’st not fear its magnitude! Declare!
 ‘And I will teach thee what thou hast to hope
 ‘In after times, by the reply I make.’ 395

Cried Guthrum, with surpassing majesty,
 ‘This be the favour which alone I ask!—
 ‘The greatest, and most holily desired!
 ‘Let me partake thy faith! Let me receive
 ‘The name of *Christian*, and embrace, like thee, 400
 ‘That true religion, which can dictate thus,
 ‘And thus perform. Let me renounce,’ he cried,
 ‘That faith which I too long have gloried in,
 ‘Which not, like thine, conducts to peace and love,
 ‘And kindly intercourse, but, wrath and blood, 405
 ‘And discord horrible.—To her, thy queen,
 ‘Who stands beside thee, I this feeling owe;—
 ‘This renovation, I would humbly hope
 ‘Of the interior man. Her words, ere this,
 ‘Have tumult wrought within me;—rais’d my thoughts 410
 ‘To things immortal, scenes invisible,
 ‘Piercing my spirit. At her speech, I felt,
 ‘Strange to my heart, some kindred sympathies,—
 ‘Th’ approving voice within, but when she spake
 ‘That christians could forgive the bitterest foe, 415
 ‘And love requite for hatred: this, I cried,
 ‘Can never be! Thine are the sounding words
 ‘That have no meaning; but, I now have found,
 ‘Christians can pardon! Thou hast pardon’d me!’

Alfred with rapture answer’d, ‘This is joy, 420
 ‘Not of earth’s kind, to find a man, like thee,
 ‘Whom I so honour! by that power Divine
 ‘Who governs all things, call’d to the true faith,
 ‘Thro’ the remonstrance, pleadings, influence,
 ‘Of her thy captive, Alfred’s peerless queen!’— 425

¶ When Alfred thus, his eye to heaven upraised.

' Who now shall question Providence? Who doubt
 ' That he who this stupendous fabric rear'd,
 ' Still views and governs it :—its course directs—
 ' Thro' all its windings, intricate and dark ; 430
 ' Perplexing oft !—appearing to weak man
 ' Confused and orderless, who sees alone
 ' The veriest surface.—Could he look beneath,
 ' And heaven, the needful faculty bestow'd,
 ' In what to him seem'd complicate and chance, 435
 ' He would behold unvarying harmony !—
 ' Perfection infinite in small and great,
 ' Worthy the high and Sovereign Arbiter !

Checking the tear, Alswitha answer made.
 ' Such is *my* faith! May we indulge the hope, 440
 ' That Guthrum, who, ere this, true worth possess'd
 ' And half the christian's graces now may shine,
 ' With cloudless light, honour'd and lov'd of all.
 ' One question may I ask thee? Guthrum! say!
 ' Where is thy Daughter? Where is she I loved? 445
 ' That noble maiden, who so many hours
 ' Comfort imparted, when the world to me
 ' Seem'd blank and dead? Now shall this heart display,
 ' The gratitude I once could but express.
 ' Thou speakest not.' 450

Guthrum, distracted, cried,
 ' Spare me that thought!' Within his heart there seem'd
 Hard conflicts. ' I am sad !' he said. ' A loss
 ' Hath fall'n upon me, very hard to bear !'
 Adown his iron cheek, the tears fell fast ! 455
 At length he said. ' This weakness—pardon me !
 ' My heart is sever'd from the world and man !'
 Deep anguish revels in his throbbing breast.
 At length he said, in milder tone, ' O king !
 ' In the past fight—my Daughter fell, and now 460
 ' I am a wretched man! Duteous my child,

' As ever father had ! a loving child !
 ' I could have welcom'd death, ere she had died,
 ' My child ! my comfort ! never more shall I
 ' Behold thee, oh my daughter ! Thou art gone ! 465
 ' I am a poor and desolate old man,
 ' Bereaved of all things !'

As he stood and paus'd
 Feeling what anguish means ! his Daughter springs—
 Swift from her hiding-place, and rapturous cries, 470
 ' My father ! O, my father !' On his neck
 The damsel hangs, and copious are the tears
 That flow around !—More eloquent,
 Never was Silence ! None dared break the charm !
 It was a holy stillness !—where the heart, 475
 Spurn'd the obtruding service of vain words.
 Recovering from amaze, that half obscured—
 Earth and material things,—as from a dream,
 The startled Sire exclaims,—' Impossible !
 ' My daughter ? Yes thou art ! O, God of heaven ! 480
 ' Let me not die !'—He clasps her to his heart !
 And gently breathes—' My daughter, O, my daughter !'

It is a moving sight—to see old age,—
 A warrior fierce in strife, by feeling touch'd—
 Th' omnipotence of nature ! now reduced 485
 To the soft tones of infancy. He spake,
 If speech it were, that scarce an utterance found,—
 ' This hour compensates for a life of pain !'

After the pause profound. Alfred thus spake.
 ' I share your transport ! Long may you enjoy 490
 ' The happiness you both so well deserve !
 ' Guthrum, my friend ! attend, The hour is late.
 ' Befits thee now to seek thy castle, near,
 ' And to the Danes, declare my purpose ; say,
 ' For Guthrum's sake, I will forgive all wrongs, 495

' And grant free pardon ! Tell them to confide
 ' In Wessex' king ! And if with thee they choose
 ' To own my sway, and live beneath my crown,
 ' I will receive them ! They with us shall prove
 ' One people, whom, to serve and to protect, 500
 ' Shall be my fervent wish, my constant care.
 ' Tell them, the fleet, that to these shores convey'd
 ' Ivar their chief, and all his followers' wives,
 ' Not wholly is consumed : the women live,
 ' Unharm'd, with all their tribe of innocents, 505
 ' By me protected ! If they here remain,
 ' Soon shall they meet, and form one family
 ' With us their friends. But if they rather seek,
 ' Denmark, with lingering love, safe shall they go !
 ' But there is one thing more of which to speak, 510
 ' Return thou for the night with this thy child !
 ' Be here to-morrow ! Thou hast yet to share
 ' A holy rite, Baptism ; known of all
 ' Who truly form Christ's kingdom militant.'
 Guthrum replied, ' Most earnestly I seek 515
 ' This proof of my conviction and full faith
 ' In Christ my Saviour ! On the coming morn,
 ' Thou shalt behold me here !' This said, the Dane
 Straight, with his daughter, left the Saxon tent.

To Oddune thus, Alfred his words address'd : 520
 ' Chieftain I prize thee, and would fain behold
 ' All happiness attend thee, but, what joy
 ' Can solitude afford ? Society,
 ' The smiles of her we love, th' endearing wife,
 ' The hopeful offspring, and the converse sweet— 525
 ' Affection mutual, pure where interests blend—
 ' These give a zest to all things here below ;
 ' Earth's costliest blessings ! E'en the very cares,
 ' That sometimes the connubial prospect cloud,
 ' Stir up the choicest feelings of man's heart, 530

‘ And have their balm within them. May I say,
 ‘ If beauty can attract, affection charm,
 ‘ Or constancy delight thee—gallant chief,
 ‘ Think of yon damsel!’ Oddune thus replied.

‘ Monarch! my heart is loyalty and praise. 535
 ‘ Guthrum’s fair daughter, who shall not admire?
 ‘ Her charms I own, her virtues I confess,
 ‘ But, never must I strive, by word, or deed,
 ‘ To win the damsel’s love. Her I respect,
 ‘ But, more I cannot. To another maid, 540
 ‘ My vows are plighted; and I trust ere long,
 ‘ Now peace her olive wand o’er Britain waves,
 ‘ To taste domestic joys, and emulate
 ‘ The virtues of my great and noble king.’

Alswitha cried, ‘ Brave man! Thou hast a soul 545
 ‘ Which all should rev’rence, all should imitate.
 ‘ The flower of British youth for her shall strive,
 ‘ Yet never one more noble than thyself.
 ‘ Oddune, I like thy frank and manly speech!
 ‘ There is a race, worthless, and lost to shame, 550
 ‘ Who rove from fair to fair, all maids alike,
 ‘ Deck’d with officious smiles and courtesies,
 ‘ Boasting of conquests. On their tongues are found
 ‘ Maxims of worth and true humanity;
 ‘ And they can loudly talk of right, and wrong, 555
 ‘ Of honour, and injustice, and true love,
 ‘ Repeated oft with meanings light as air.
 ‘ Such of eternal constancy will vow,
 ‘ Or, at reserved affection humbly glance,
 ‘ Or, less presuming, tho’ of equal force, 560
 ‘ Speak only with the language of the eye:
 ‘ And thus, with low and base hypocrisy,
 ‘ Winding false way to woman’s gentle heart.
 ‘ These shadows of true men, might dread the thought

- ' To tarnish female honour, but would smile 565
' To murder female peace, and, unconcern'd,
' Nay, with self-compliments, and secret pride,
' See grief corrode the cheek of innocence,
' Behold the wreck of that maid's happiness,
' Whose only fault was unrequited love. 570
' Such is not Oddune ! Thou a soldier art
' In name and spirit. May thy sex, like thee,
' Protect, not wound, the fond and guileless hearts
' Of Albion's matchless daughters.'
- Oddune bow'd, 575
- Graceful, to earth, and from the tent retired.

ALFRED :

BOOK XXIII.

ARGUMENT.

The Vision of the Guardian Angel.

WHILST, on his couch, Alfred, at midnight, slept,
He saw, or thought he saw, a Spirit, tall,
And of majestic port. His eye was mild,
Yet one fix'd look he had, as though he stood,
Immoveable, from ages infinite, 5
That came not, but appear'd. Like some huge crag,
Fix'd on its granite base, whose towering head
The wintry frosts have bleachen, and the storms,
Wrathful assail'd ; yet still it looks the same ;
Through time, in all its revolutions, bears— 10
The same eternal aspect, white, and still.

The monarch trembled, as distinct he view'd
Th' unearthly form, whose raiment shone with rays
Effulgent, self-created, diamond-like,
Making the darkness day, and o'er the tent 15
Casting celestial splendors. Alfred, long,
Endured the terror expectation brings ;
When in a low and solemn tone he cried,

'Spirit! what seek'st thou?' 'Till the sound had ceased
 And each vibration ended, that might check 20
 Communion, immaterial, all was still;
 When, thus the Spirit answer'd:

'I am one

'Of the innumerable host, who throng
 'This lower world; communicants of good. 25
 'I am thy GUARDIAN ANGEL! From the hour
 'This world received thee, I have been thy friend,
 'And ever near, commissioned by high Heaven
 'To screen thee from the powers that roam abroad,
 'Hostile to human kind. Me, God hath sent 30
 'To tell thee of his wondrous ways, and name
 'Immortal truths, such as shall cheer thy mind,
 'Hereafter, in the great and trying scenes
 'That lie before thee; for, prosperity,
 'Tho' all desire to have, few well may bear. 35
 'Thy reign shall shine amid the kings of earth,
 'Exemplar fair: whilst all will follow thee
 'Who seek their subjects' good, and hope to dwell
 'Objects of their affection, while they live,
 'Or to secure their blessing when they die:— 40
 'Mem'ry embalmed. How few of Regal Name,
 'Thus prominent in glory!

'I am sent

'Thee to instruct, in truths, needful to know
 'In thy high station, yet, if thou require 45
 'Knowledge of other sort, I may declare,
 'Tho' brief, for thou hast in Jehovah's sight
 'Found favour, and his smiles are thy reward.—
 'While men, as Pilgrims, passing on thro' Time,
 'And, fluttering far and wide, busied with cares, 50
 'The heart consuming, listening to the voice
 'Of many tempters, loud, importunate,
 'All is a dream! The man who riches seeks,
 'Toiling both night and morn, with earnest brow,

' Counting his gains, and on his future joys 55
 ' Dwelling enraptured, little knows who next
 ' His wealth may share. He little knows, how near
 ' That foe may be which blasts the rich man's all !
 ' And whosoe'er pursues, idolatrous,
 ' Fantastic Pleasure, pierces his heart thro', 60
 ' And only dreams. So he who covets Fame,
 ' The tinkling sound that on the breeze is heard,
 ' Then dies away ;—shapes insubstantial forms
 ' In tissue gay, and sighs to find at last,—
 ' Shadows unreal.—Wisdom knew them such. 65

' Men own that they are mortal, and must die.
 ' Some *talk* of an hereafter ; of a world—
 ' Eternal,—waiting for Earth's teeming tribes.
 ' (Truths mighty, and which cast a littleness
 ' O'er all the passing scenes of time and sense !) 70
 ' But is not this deceptive ? Can the men,
 ' Impress'd with prospects of such magnitude,
 ' Withhold all evidence of heart,—of life ?
 ' Actions speak louder than the loudest words !
 ' They may profess, but conduct gives the lie. 75

' If they believed in death, that soon the shroud
 ' Would wrap them round, the turf would cover them,
 ' Truths so momentous ! could they stand unmoved ?—
 ' From all their thoughts exclude them ?—e'en appear,
 ' Thro' the whole tenor of their words and ways 80
 ' As tho' they thought their lives would never end ?
 ' If in their inmost spirit they believed
 ' In an enduring state that lies before,—
 ' Their spirits soon to enter, could they still,
 ' Possessing man's reflective faculties, 85
 ' Disport themselves, with maniac heedlessness,
 ' Upon a verge so awful ?—Falsehood,—hence !
 ' Whate'er they *say*, they *must*, they *do* believe

' This life the whole of man !—his intellects—
 ' So towering and ethereal !—spark of heaven ! 90
 ' Matter alone, and endless sleep his doom !
 ' Comporting with such faith,—all harmony !
 ' They revel, feed their pamper'd appetite,
 ' Plunge into all the world's wide vanities,
 ' And hold, at nought, the smiles, the frowns of God ! 95
 ' How vain are words, when deeds dishonour them !
 ' Say are not men, sunk in profoundest dreams ?

' But others look censorious on the crowd,
 ' Victims of folly ! and, with earnestness,
 ' Contend for an Hereafter ;—freely chide 100
 ' The thoughtless, senseless minds, that question it.
 ' These own, that when at length life wears away,
 ' After their four-score years, or more,—a state—
 ' No sport of fancy, but in verity,
 ' Waits to receive them, which, *to this*, they hope 105
 ' Will bear resemblance,—like as like may be !—
 ' For they have wealth, indulgence, luxury ;
 ' What joys, or higher heaven, can *heart* desire !—
 ' Such hearts as theirs, fetter'd, absorbed by Time.

' Tell thou such earthworms, grasping sordid dust, 110
 ' There *is* another world—of Peace and Love,
 ' Of Light, and Purity, but not for them—
 ' Unbought, unsanctified !—Heaven is a place
 ' Prepared for righteousness,—the pure in heart ;
 ' For those alone, who follow, prize, confess— 115
 ' Their Saviour,—sum and source of all their joy !
 ' Ask them, when rent asunder from their god,—
 ' Their idol, gold, what refuge will be theirs ?
 ' The *now* receding, and the *future* dark !

' Tell them, if they would Mammon, from a curse, 120
 hange to a blessing, with the liberal hand,

- ' (While owning *Him* from whom their power proceeds)
 ' To scatter, what erelong will scatter'd be !—
 ' (Earlier, perchance, by adverse circumstance !)
 ' To aid each righteous cause that languishes ;— 125
 ' Form'd to allay the pangs of suffering man,
 ' To succour worth, the sorrowing heart to cheer,
 ' Reclaim the bad, instruct the ignorant,
 ' Or, the glad tidings, special boon of Heaven !
 ' To bear to shores, far distant ;—richer freight 130
 ' Than gems, and all earth's perishable toys.
 ' Tell them the day has waned, the eve is near !
 ' That if they seek a treasure in the skies,
 ' They must be up and doing, and become,
 ' While yet they may, their own sweet almoners ; 135
 ' Leaving not honours, so refined and great
 ' To others, or till they relax their hold,
 ' And can no longer guard—what most they prize !
 ' When the last turbid dregs of life arrive,
 ' Then, haply touch'd by generous sympathy, 140
 ' They may, to waken praise, or purchase Heaven !
 ' Bestow, at death, what living they denied.—
 ' The *present* is the only theatre
 ' Where men may act the part magnanimous,—
 ' Secure both worlds :—here by obeying God,— 145
 ' Whose smiles diffuse a sunshine o'er the breast !
 ' Then, looking on, thro' goodness infinite
 ' (Still trusting in the sinner's Advocate)
 ' To pleasures, passing thought, mid realms on high !—
 ' All from their dreams awake. If in this world, 150
 ' Happy, thrice happy they !—
 ' Yet one there is,
 ' Wandering awhile below, who does not dream,—
 ' The *christian* ! He, amid a dreaming world,
 ' With eye, wide open, darts his filmless gaze 155
 ' Thro' nature, and beholds his Father's hand.
 ' Unmoved by all the turmoils of the world,

' He trusts the guide unseen, and with a joy
 ' Wealth cannot buy, looks forward to the place
 ' Where sighs and tears are banish'd,—to the day 160
 ' When, with the ransom'd, he will lift his voice,
 ' And share the rest, the bliss, which, evermore,
 ' God has prepared—for his true worshippers !

' With wonder raise thy thoughts. Of the vast whole,—
 ' This universe, and all created things, 165
 ' Man glimpses but an atom. Higher still,—
 ' The *confines*, e'en by seraphs unexplored !
 ' We cannot trace the governance of God—
 ' On the vast scale, where angels' thoughts are lost !
 ' What then can mortals know ? The sagest minds 170
 ' Thro' the tempestuous vestibule of time,
 ' See things confused. The plan, the symmetry
 ' Which marks th' Eternal's works, or great, or small,
 ' Pertaining to earth's complicated scenes,
 ' A rayless night conceals, and such to be, 175
 ' Till borne beyond the grave, when all will prove,—
 ' (All which concerns his rugged path thro' life,)
 ' Light, love, and harmony. The doubtful points
 ' In man's existence, that once pierced his mind,
 ' And made him sorrowful, will then appear 180
 ' No sport of chance, but order'd by that Power,
 ' Supreme in knowledge, as beneficence.
 ' Tho', from thy darkness, thou may'st often mourn
 ' Evils thou canst not cure, and see events
 ' Prove adverse to thy wishes, evermore 185
 ' Trust in unerring wisdom. Look above !
 ' And, as befitteth mortal, patiently,
 ' Endure in silence ; faith thy anchor-hold.

' Tho' strange to thee, and inconceivable,—
 ' The earthly mind surpassing,—lost to him 190
 ' Seduced, enslaved, by things of time and sense,

' Between the realm of spirits, and thine own
 ' A thin translucent veil, alone, prevails,
 ' Which sometimes the Eternal draws aside,
 ' Opening the splendors of the unseen world : 195
 ' For at his bidding, an unearthly blaze,—
 ' A beam—insufferable o'er the sight
 ' Pours its effulgence ;—as when Stephen saw
 ' Christ by his Father's side ! Or when the Son,
 ' On Tabor's mount, unveil'd his native glory ! 200
 ' Whilst his three followers, awe-struck, fell to earth !
 ' Or when the fierce, and slaughter-breathing Saul,
 ' Near to Damascus, falling, heard aghast,
 ' A voice, well known !—'mid light ineffable—
 ' Supernal, sun-surpassing ! which transformed, 205
 ' By the same power that gave creation birth,
 ' The lion to the meekness of the lamb !

' Or when, in elder times, the hallow'd seer—
 ' Elisha, in the city where he dwelt,
 ' Felt calm, while hostile armies gather'd round, 210
 ' And one, by terror smitten, told his fears :—
 ' Knowing that more were for him than against,
 ' The prophet pray'd, when, lo ! the trembling spirit,
 ' He who had quail'd at death's stern harbingers,
 ' Renounced his fears. He saw celestial hosts,— 215
 ' Chariots of fire, and horses,—compassing
 ' Him, who communion held with God Most High !
 ' So, till the last loud trump shall sound, all men—
 ' Trusting in Heaven, while sojourning below,
 ' Shall stand secure, encompass'd not by shields 220
 ' Of earthly temp'rament, but by the Power,
 ' Whose arms are a pavilion round about.

' Joy to the heart, in a perennial stream,
 ' Faith brings, sustain'd by confidence in Him
 ' Who sees, and governs all things. This the pearl 225

'Of worth transcendent, holiness to prize,
 'All evil loathe, as the accursed thing,
 'Which grieves and drives the Spirit from the breast.
 'Mid all thy cares, perplexities, and woes,
 'Trust in a God of goodness. Canst thou doubt 230
 'His care of mortals, for their temporal things,—
 'The *fleeting*, when such stores his love has made
 'For their *eternal* interests?—shown so clear,
 'By the benign bestowment of his Son!
 'To teach, and death endure, that man might live! 235

'This is the Christian's solace—his strong tower.
 'Mid all things fading, here, Stability
 'Stamps his firm tread!—While thrones and monuments,
 'Temples, and gorgeous domes, and pinnacles,—
 'Piercing the heavens, Time, with his withering hand, 240
 'Lays low, and their memorial blots from earth,
 'The christian, on his still-enduring rock,
 'Stands, undismay'd.—His spirit fears no change.
 'Mutation, bane of all things here below,
 'Extends not to the realms where he is bound, 245
 'Nor to the joys that wait him!—the delights,
 'Surpassing eye and ear, and which the mind
 'Vainly essays to reach, or circumscribe.
 'Secure in his eternal heritage,—
 'His home, long sought, his mansion, out of sight, 250
 'He, 'mid a jarring, dark, tempestuous world,
 'Calm, and unmoved, walks full of light and peace.

'Not in th' Eternal's all-pervading eye
 'Is the same deed by different men perform'd :
 'Motives and principles to him appear, 255
 'Clear, tho' conceal'd from human scrutiny ;
 'And some who claim high titles,—lofty names
 'From erring mortals,—lighter than the air,
 ' Oft-times, to him appear, whose searching eye

- ‘Pierces the deepest shade. He oft beholds 260
 ‘Amid the actions, raising loud acclaim—
 ‘The purpose dark!—Externals live for praise;
 ‘The heart is Heaven’s own province, and the man,
 ‘Who, when no eye surveys, communion holds—
 ‘Most with his Maker;—tho’ a thoughtless world, 265
 ‘Haply may frown, from his less prominence
 ‘In blazing zeal, the nearest stands allied
 ‘To joys celestial, and the smiles of Heaven.
 ‘Suspect the ostentatious, and the vain.
 ‘True piety retires, and covets not 270
 ‘Notice or plaudit;—holding light, man’s praise
 ‘Emblem of frailty, crush’d before the moth.
 ‘The lofty look, the proud preeminence,—
 ‘The altitude which Mammon gives her sons,—
 ‘All is the spirit from beneath! Erelong, 275
 ‘Persons, and things in other light will stand.
 ‘Then, on thine entrance into realms of bliss,
 ‘Some wilt thou meet, who, in the lower world,
 ‘Were deem’d by thee, the doubtful, kindling fears;
 ‘Now clothed in spotless robe, and in their hand 280
 ‘Waving the palm-branch; whilst in yonder group,—
 ‘Retiring from the presence of their Lord
 ‘Some will be found, dismantled of their guise,—
 ‘Who sought all praise, but that which Heaven bestows!
 ‘It may perplex thy mind, yet, know assured, 285
 ‘All men are better than they seem, or worse;
 ‘From this learn charity. Judgment is God’s alone!
 ‘Censorious words restrain. Th’ anathema
 ‘Man ill becometh, or the scornful tongue
 ‘That to a weaker brother would declare, 290
 ‘While lifting the high look, ‘Approach me not!
 ‘I am the holy, thou—the cast-away!’
 ‘Whate’er thou lose, an entrance strive to gain—
 ‘At the straight gate, and for an evil world
 ‘Feel, and in pity, lift th’ imploring eye: 295

' For, to desire another's benefit,
 ' Tho' that desire be vain, brings on the heart,
 ' O'erflowing with celestial charity,
 ' A rich return. Indulge th' ecstatic hope,
 ' The fervent prayer,—that God would hasten on 300
 ' Time's tardy course, when this terrene shall hail,
 ' (No more to set) the Sun of righteousness,
 ' Driving the clouds before his chariot wheels,
 ' One chorus issuing from earth's thousand tribes.
 ' Then will the eternal consummation rise, 305
 ' Rending with shouts, and concords jubilant,
 ' Heaven's adamantine gates, and starry thrones.

' Flee thou the monster pride, he whelms the breast
 ' In storm and tempest; driving peace afar;
 ' The blessing which the wise man values most. 310
 ' Humility! fairest of mortal garbs!
 ' And beautiful as morning! hold it dear!
 ' It is a heavenly ornament! Be thou
 ' Gentle of spirit, ready to be taught,
 ' Seeing thy frailty: so shalt thou receive 315
 ' Knowledge to cheer thee, wisdom to direct,
 ' And to th' exactest point of benefit,
 ' Whate'er high Heaven sees needful.

' Ever know,
 ' Man's mind, the full effulgence of all light 320
 ' May not endure; therefore, be still, nor strive
 ' To lift the veil, God hath seen fit to cast
 ' O'er many things, and in profoundest shades
 ' Hidden from mortal sight. One thing is clear!
 ' God is all wise, all good. 325

' Believing this,
 ' Dive not in that unfathomable gulf,
 ' Conjecture vague, but with the little light,
 ' Certain, thou hast, rest satisfied; for more,
 ' Seeking to know, will but with pangs torment, 330

'And, in the end, make thee forget what is,
 'To guess what may be. Soon the time will come,
 '(A point between!) when each mysterious thing
 'Shall be made clear, and to th' assembled worlds
 'God's ways to man be justified, and all 335
 'Cry, 'Holy, Holy, Lord of heaven and earth!'

'Thou hast endured, 'till now, a load of cares,
 'Such as have wrung thy heart, and in the hour
 'When faithless doubts prevail'd, made thee suspect
 'That, 'mid this world, thou wast ordain'd to roam 340
 'A friendless, drooping, solitary man,
 'Uncertain whence, and whither bound, unknown;
 'A blank in the creation; born to mourn.
 'Henceforth, when sorrows wring thy heart, believe—
 'They spring alone from that benignant power, 345
 'Who seeks by every trial, one effect,
 'His creatures' benefit—to raise their hearts
 'From sin to purity, from earth to heaven.
 'How different man's from the Almighty's view!
 'God often sees prosperity, or pride, 350
 'Or unbelief, or that disastrous foe—
 'Indiff'rence, offspring of iniquity!
 'Those whom he loves o'ertake, and lest the flood
 'Should drown their spirits, bear them far away
 'From holiness, and healing sympathies, 355
 'Angels, like me, become His ministers,
 'And deal some harsh, yet needful antidote
 'To call them to reflection, to arrest
 'Their wandering spirits, verging fast on sloth,—
 'That dark'ning, dead'ning, torpor of the soul! 360
 'Haply, some friend, or idol, loved too well!
 'Sent to the grave, untimely; or disease,—
 'The couch of pain and languor, when Life's glare,
 'Receding, shows the emptiness of Time,
 'With the supreme importance of a hope 365

' Stretching beyond these shadows ; or perchance,
 ' To rouse them from their fatal lethargy,
 ' Anguish of spirit, or the dread decree
 ' Which strips them of the baser dross of earth
 ' To give them an eternal heritage. 370

' Yet for thy comfort, more may I declare.
 ' Such are the joys of the eternal state
 ' Which wait the righteous, that one transient glance,
 ' One faint perception of its weight of glory,
 ' Might, from its base, the mind, hurl, and unfit 375
 ' For mortal exercise. Men here below,

' Endued with the celestial antepast,
 ' Would feel such hopes, such longings to depart,
 ' And mix with the extatic choir, who shout—
 ' Praises to God, forming one concourse grand 380
 ' Of all the righteous,—Patriarchs, and Saints,—

' Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs,—holy men
 ' The lights of every age, the salt of earth,
 ' The sons of God, redeemed and sanctified,
 ' That all the little round of mortal things 385

' Needful to life, and fitting them as men,
 ' Would fade away, nor longer interest those
 ' So soon to leave them, and participate
 ' In scenes celestial ; therefore wisely veil'd !
 ' Save, when the dying man, the Christian, looks 390

' Beyond this lower world, glimpsing the joys,
 ' The unfading crown that waits him, and the cloud,
 ' Bearing Archangels, from whose giddy height
 ' They look, with open arms, and beckoning cry,
 ' Approach, bless'd spirit ! He may half conceive 395

' Heaven's weight of glory ! Oft the good man's speech,
 ' When on the verge of the eternal world,
 ' May wild, and wandering seem, to us around
 ' Attendant angels, other thoughts arise !
 ' We hear the broken word, the silent prayer ; 400

- ' We mark the look of agonizing joy,
 ' When the first beam of immaterial light
 ' Darts through the mind, and o'er the countenance
 ' Diffuses heavenly radiance.
 ' Wondering hear. 405
 ' After thy peace with God, thro' faith in Christ,
 ' (Stretch'd on thy dying bed, when earth recedes,
 ' Its loftiest objects less than vanity !)
 ' This truth may solace thee :—th' entrancing hope
 ' Of meeting *first*, in the eternal state, 410
 ' Those whom thou lov'dst below. Rejoicing learn.
 ' The child, the parent, wife, the partner dear,
 ' The friend,—found in adversity the same,
 ' If subjects of Messiah's kingdom, crowd
 ' Around the dying pilgrim, when his breath— 415
 ' Labours, till all is still,—to bid him hail !
 ' To greet his sight with all he loved below !
 ' To welcome him to scenes ineffable !
 ' To gratulate,—that the dark realms of Time,—
 ' Regions of sin and sorrow, ever more 420
 ' Have pass'd away, and an eternity
 ' Before him opens, casting into shade—
 ' The brightest thoughts, conceptions, hopes of man.

 ' That greeting over, in the blissful world
 ' Whereto thou hastest, filled with unknown forms, 425
 ' Once inconceivable, long will the eye,
 ' Cleans'd from earth's prejudice, behold around
 ' Innumerable things, all wonderful !
 ' Yet, like the scar'd bird hovering round its nest,
 ' It will delight to view its former state, 430
 ' Dwelling on faded scenes. Whilst gifted thus
 ' To view once more the round of human things
 ' So lately left, nor alien yet become,
 ' This will arouse his chief astonishment,
 ' Waking, almost, a passing pang in heaven,— 435

- ' That men so frail, the creatures of a day,
 ' Should view, insensible, a world so fill'd
 ' With speaking monitors, so aptly formed,
 ' So wisely govern'd, so o'erspread with signs
 ' Of goodness and intelligence ;—yet once 440
 ' Have follow'd the vain forms that cross'd their path,
 ' The shadows of a moment ! unconcern'd
 ' At that advancing and imperious hour,
 ' When Death, in terrors dress'd, shall claim his prey !—
 ' When the sick eye turns inward to find out 445
 ' Some joyous recollections, faith, and hope ! —
 ' The grand preparatives for that dread hour
 ' When the loud trump shall sound, and man arise
 ' To immortality !
 ' If minds could doubt 450
 ' Where all is certainty, men might suspect
 ' That ever they on mortal ground had trod,
 ' And heard so clear the voice of conscience, seen
 ' Such proofs of an hereafter, yet remained
 ' So callous to the certainty, which stood, 455
 ' Like the fair star of eve in heaven's blue vault,
 ' When all is dim beside.
 ' Angels, like me,
 ' Feel pity for a world involved in sin,
 ' But pity most we feel, when we behold 460
 ' Immortal souls, just issuing into life,
 ' And ignorant of all things, when we see
 ' These babes in knowledge, with presumptuous breath
 ' Arraign the Deity ! with critic eye
 ' Scan all his ways, here of improvements speak, 465
 ' There, charge with folly. Insects of an hour !
 ' Before, thus impious, Heaven's Eternal King
 ' You venture to instruct, say, who you are !
 ' Show your credentials ! In minuter things
 ' Display your power !—add fragrance to the rose, 470
 ' Or give new splendors to the setting sun.

' That untamed spirit, Pride, which peopled first
 ' Hell's dark abodes, and made Omnipotence
 ' With thunders shake Heaven's everlasting thrones,
 ' Now strays on earth, urged by whose counsels, man 475
 ' Looks higher than his Maker, and would fain
 ' Direct, not follow, govern, not obey.

' Before my mission ceases, I must name
 ' Duties severe, which to all men belong,
 ' But most, a king. Mark, and hereafter live! 480

' Thou art established on thy throne. Thy foes
 ' Now sleep in death, and thou, prosperity
 ' Long shalt enjoy, (if that can be call'd long
 ' Whose utmost reign resembles the fleet cloud.)
 ' Blessing and bless'd. If thou be faithful found; 485
 ' If thou preserve thy heart from life's low stains,
 ' And look to God, he never will forsake—
 ' Thee nor thy house. Yet, ever bear in mind,
 ' Faith, (like the bud that to maturity
 ' Fails to arrive) in the Almighty's sight, 490
 ' No value holds. But the immortal incense
 ' That mounts on high, and with its fragrancy
 ' Fills the seraphic mansions, springs from love,
 ' From faith, in sight extinguish'd, scattering far
 ' Celestial fruit, which angels smile to see, 495
 ' Spreading o'er heaven, a sudden light, which gives
 ' New lustre to their pinions, as they wave,
 ' Waking harmonious airs.

' Look thou to God,
 ' And ever prize 'bove all created good— 500
 ' Jesus thy Saviour! thy Redeemer, Christ!
 ' The pledge of hope! the anchor of the soul!
 ' The bright and morning star! whose tranquil beam
 ' Shall light thee safe, through the dark vale of death;

'Thy only solace. He hath been the joy - 505
 'Of thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand,
 'Who now have spread their palms and learn'd to sing
 'Hosannas in the highest; and he, still,
 'Will cheer each heir of glory, till the hour
 'When time shall be no more. Men little think, 510
 'The best, the wisest, the least bound to earth,
 'What countless and eternal benefits
 'From Him proceed, what blessings for his sake
 'God hath prepared, and what felicities
 'Await his true disciples: men who lived 515
 'Not for themselves: who, a benignant glance
 'Cast all around them; striving with what power
 'Heaven had conferr'd, how best to moderate
 'The pungency of suffering, and the minds
 'Of thoughtless mortals raise from earth to Heaven. 520

'In the pursuit of good, they oft are pain'd
 'By men's ingratitude.—He who does good,—
 'Must do it for itself. The noblest deed
 'Is tarnish'd by an eye to human praise.
 'The loud complainants, who?—Is it their aim— 525
 'Their purpose?—their great end?—their moving cause?—
 'Man's praise to gain?—The pure in heart (tho' sweet
 'Some sense of obligation—kindness shown)
 'Meekly will say—when robbed of their desert,—
 'The evil thine. I look beyond, above. 530
 'I trust by these poor services,—to gain
 'My Maker's smile.—I do it, Lord, to thee!'

'The true disciples faint not, at the ills
 'That follow man as shadows, when required
 'Burdens to bear, by wisdom infinite. 535
 'Like their great Master, they the weight endure
 'And drink affliction's cup, and walk thro' earth
 'Like pilgrims, to a better country bound,

- 'Tho' briefly doomed, while in their non-age here,
 'To stray thro' thorns, and bear the buffetings 540
 'Of sin and satan : yet, the strife will cease !
 'The journey shortly end ! The race be o'er !
 'The crown be won !
 'With lasting gratitude
 'Let thy breast glow, for that direction true, 545
 'Mid a dark world, the Book of God ! When joy—
 'In vortex-like o'erwhelms thy dizzy mind,
 'Makes every sound harmonious, every form
 'Appear in vernal beauties ; lest the draught
 'Intoxicate, and hurry on thy feet 550
 'To join the evil throng, who share the gift
 'Unmindful of the Giver ; turn thine eye
 'To that assemblage of divinest things,
 'Wisdom and righteousness : there mark the end
 'Of those, who, in prosperity, forgot 555
 'The God that made them, and whose bounteous hand
 'Sent them their every blessing. And when grief
 'Presses thy spirit to the earth, still fly
 'To the same fountain of all knowledge good !
 'Its words shall soothe thy cares, remove thy doubts, 560
 'Allay thy sorrows, level make thy path,
 'Cheerful thy life, thy death serene, thine end
 'Eternal glory ! There shalt thou behold
 'In all dilemmas the right road to take :
 'In every state, what duties rise, what deeds 565
 'Secure th' applauding look of Heaven, what course
 'The weary and way-faring man may tread :
 'This ever prize ! So will thy mind delight
 'To seek thy people's benefit, and strive
 'To do all good ; thy law be equity ; 570
 'And while thou guid'st the sceptre, wear'st the crown,
 'Thou wilt behold, unmoved, each gaudy scene
 'Of pomp and splendour, and this truth remain,
 'Stamp'd on thy heart—that life a shadow is,

‘ A passing show, a meteor, seen awhile 575
 ‘ In dazzling hues, but, fleeting as the light
 ‘ That from the dancing wave, at summer eve,
 ‘ Reflects the sun, slow sinking in the west.

‘ But there are those who venture to reject—
 ‘ This only light that ever earth received ; 580
 ‘ The lamp, which God, in mercy to mankind,
 ‘ Sent to direct their feet, to glad their hearts,
 ‘ To warn them of an everlasting state.
 ‘ With lofty spirit such may feign to spurn
 ‘ The pearl above all price, may laugh in health, 585
 ‘ May triumph in prosperity, may lean
 ‘ Upon perverted reason, and strive hard
 ‘ To think themselves secure ; but they will find
 ‘ A reed their staff, for soon the time shall come,
 ‘ Advancing rapid, when their confidence, 590
 ‘ Deemed durable as earth, will fail, their hearts
 ‘ Sink with dismay, and Death, in terrors dress’d,
 ‘ Beckon with awful aspect, while their sins,
 ‘ In dread procession, move before their eyes,
 ‘ Unpardon’d, at that hour—when the whole earth 595
 ‘ Would be exchanged for hope. In vain for such
 ‘ The broad and sapphire gates of heaven were spread ;
 ‘ They all refused to enter, they adored
 ‘ Mammon, and this vain world ; tho’ light had cast
 ‘ A radiance all around, they prized it not !— 600
 ‘ Their deeds were evil, and their hearts subdued,
 ‘ And prostrated to earth !

Prepare thine ear

‘ For revelations of th’ unfolding time.
 ‘ His *Mind* and *Will* the Highest has revealed, 605
 ‘ One volume bears the treasure ; leading straight
 ‘ To Peace and Happiness, yet sorrowing, learn,
 ‘ Man, prone to error, in ten thousand ways
 ‘ Diverges from the Truth. This Book alone,

' Instructs, alike, the mighty and the mean,— 610
 ' Age, youth; the towering intellect, with him
 ' Whose knowledge—just descrys the way to heaven.
 ' Its words are lucid, yet, tho' manifest,
 ' Some wander, steep'd in pride, whose hearts revolt
 ' From shackles, tho' imposed by Love Divine. 615
 ' Such add, or else diminish, what should be—
 ' Sacred, inviolate; the standard, fixed
 ' For faith and practice, that admits no change
 ' Which whelms not in confusion, doubt, and death.

' The distant age before my vision spreads! 620
 ' Men will arise, once rescued from the gloom
 ' Of grov'ling Superstition; ransom'd once
 ' From bondage, now returning to their chains!—
 ' In love with midnight!—Ingrates! these regard
 ' The Glorious Spirits, who, to make them free, 625
 ' So oft their lives resign'd;—(blessings and great
 ' Attend them! Heroes in the noblest cause;)
 ' Yet, who th' emancipating wand uprais'd,
 ' Now are renounced,—forsaken of their friends!—
 ' Stray sheep, and wand'ring in the wilderness! 630
 ' The Highest bring them to his fold again!

' Far off I see the light of heaven obscured!
 ' The grand, the pure, the simple truths of God,
 ' Pour'd on selected minds, by Him, whose words,
 ' Life were, and Spirit, yet, thro' wills perverse, 635
 ' (By process slow) perverted, till, at length,
 ' Deep darkness gathers! *Truth* retires to rocks,
 ' And lonely vallies, whilst the Powers that be,—
 ' Teachers profess'd of heavenly sanctities,
 ' Now raised to grandeur and supremacy, 640
 ' In sacerdotal pride and *priestly* pomp,
 ' Wage war on *Truth*, and with infuriate wrath
 ' Hunt it, and all who hold it, whilst the blood

‘Of holiest men, the children of the sky,
 ‘Flows copious, martyrs in their Saviour’s cause. 645

‘In dim perspective, visions still arise !
 ‘I see the marshall’d bands for war prepare ;
 ‘Fire in their eye, and venom in their heart !
 ‘They march to meet the foe. Behold them there,
 ‘Ranging the hill-top. Now, from clift to clift, 650
 ‘Coursing the enemy, and, when beheld,
 ‘Quickening their speed ; alike, thro’ young or old,
 ‘With no recoil, plunging the blood-red spear.
 ‘*There* fly the mothers, grasping in their arms
 ‘Their infants, whilst their children speed behind, 655
 ‘The fathers urging them !—while men pursue,
 ‘(More fitly demons named) who, pitiless,
 ‘Slay all, insatiate, glorying in the deed.

‘Say, what the crime, that mortal man can urge
 ‘To hunt, like beasts of prey, his fellow man, 660
 ‘Not sparing, in his fury, age, or sex ?
 ‘Are those distracted fugitives, pursued,
 ‘With zeal so fierce, from cave to precipice,
 ‘From flow’ry vale, to ice-piled regions wild,
 ‘Outlaws, denounced of justice, pests abhor’d, 665
 ‘Wasters, and plund’ers, spirits flesh’d in strife,
 ‘And plotting murders ? charging earth with crime,
 ‘That they should live ? These simple mountaineers,
 ‘Known for the bland amenities of life ;
 ‘Inflicting wrong on none, and kind to all ;— 670
 ‘Those mothers, (with their babes) their husbands like,
 ‘Valiant for truth, and yielding all for Christ,
 ‘Slaughter to ’scape, are rushing from their homes,
 ‘Pursued with hideous yells ! their wounded limbs
 ‘Purpling the driven snow.—So late, who saw— 675
 ‘In contemplation, calm, or with their hearts,
 ‘Warm’d into praise, beholding on all sides,

' Nature's magnificence !—the ice-piled rock,
 ' The rifted crag, the roaring cataract,
 ' The misty mountain, and the ravine dark,— 680
 ' Awing the spirit !—pointing to that power,
 ' In his exuberance of majesty,
 ' Who form'd the whole ! Arrested in their prayers ;
 ' E'en while to Heaven their adorations rise,
 ' They hear the hostile shout ! They glimpse the foe ! 685
 ' And, life to save, haste on, unknowing where,
 ' Hard follow'd by avengers !—What the cause ?
 ' Again the enquiring spirit anxious asks,
 ' That can assail these peaceful villagers
 ' Loving their home, and wishing well to all ? 690
 ' I hear a tonsured advocate reply ;
 ' They are a sect proscribed, whose very breath
 ' Poisons the air, and whom t' exterminate,
 ' Blessing confers on earth, and Heaven secures.
 ' They all are *heretics* ! In arrogance, 695
 ' They dare to question men infallible !
 ' E'en God's Vicegerent, in *their* eyes, receives
 ' No rank divine, or deferential dread ;
 ' Whilst, as the consummation of all wrong,
 ' The thunders of the Vatican they slight, 700
 ' Nor yield obedience to the Bulls of Rome !
 ' What punishment too great for crimes like these ?

' Illustrious sufferers ! you, from haughty *Priests*,
 ' The threat'ning summons heard, but all was vain :
 ' War's desolations shake not your resolves. 705
 ' Intent alone to gain the path of life,
 ' Like ancestors revered, you worship God
 ' As conscience dictates : read the sacred page ;
 ' Practise its precepts ; trust its promises ;
 ' And prize the Saviour !—but, stupendous wrong ! 710
 ' You love not *Priests*, sable, or white, or grey ;
 ' *Priests*, as of yore, like whited sepulchres,

' Fair to behold, but all from sight conceal'd—
 ' Revolting !—The Inspector, God alone !
 ' Intolerant Church ! Founded in artifice !— 715
 ' What crowds of murder'd spirits thee accuse !
 ' Cheating the world with ceremonious forms !
 ' By blood cemented, and on falsehood rear'd !—
 ' Myriads will hail the moment of thy fall !

' The men who thus from Rome's intol'rance flee,— 720
 ' Regardless where, so they might peace obtain ;
 ' At length asylum find, in loneliest spot,
 ' 'Mid desolation wild, where busy man
 ' Never had rested. Here their morsel coarse,
 ' (A luxury from hunger) they partake, 725
 ' And feel that freedom, compensation makes,
 ' Amply, for all their hardships. Here their cots
 ' Successive rise, with stunted shrubs around ;
 ' Their gardens,—spots of green beside the hills,
 ' Cheering their heart,—such as they call'd their own. 730
 ' An envied lot ! wants few, and well supplied ;
 ' Contentment their companion, Joy their guest,
 ' Roaming at will—o'er their domain of rocks
 ' Controll'd of none. Their thriving herds of goats
 ' Now rise around,—companions of their toil, 735
 ' Picking their scanty herbage where they may,—
 ' High on the mountain peak precipitous,
 ' Or, 'mid the clouds, scarce seen by man below ;
 ' Or, in the glen profound, accessible
 ' Only to feet like theirs,—While seasons roll, 740
 ' Their happiness increases. With delight,
 ' Alike thro' all their tribes, the young, the old,
 ' Regardful of the bounteous *Hand* unseen
 ' Chant praises to their Maker, night and morn,
 ' Contented, envying not the rich or great. 745

' Vain covert from oppression !—To their cost,

'The *priests* have found them! and aloud exclaim,
 'Insulters of the only saving creed!
 'Death! or the *Church*! These sons of liberty,
 'Through all their hardy tribes, unterrified, 750
 'Re-echo—'Death!'—Did *Death* and *Priests* prevail?
 'Full often! Hosts of Virtue's noblest sons
 'Their life's-blood gave! whilst many a mangled corse,
 'Parent and child, 'mid cave, or lonely glen,
 'Banquets provided for the birds of prey!— 753
 'Unyielding, like the widow's cruse, again,
 'The seed sprang up. Tho' check'd, it sprang once more.
 'A remnant lived, and *lives*! May Heaven's right arm
 'Sustain and succour them! His spirit grant!
 'And swell their joys, their numbers, and their store! 760

'But who, save spirits base, shall bless their foes?
 'Blots of the Christian's name! who cruelties
 'Hatch'd on their bed, and with composure, doom'd
 'Their thousands to proscription,—torture,—death!
 'Rav'nous for power, such spirits, charged with hate, 765
 'All times alike, would doom to bonds and chains,
 'Remediless destruction, all who dare
 'Their law oppose. Such, in their arrogance,
 'Would fain deny man's noblest privilege,—
 'The power to think :—to use his faculties : 770
 'Deeming *that* gift, the Right Divine of *Priests*!
 'Are they not famed for perfidy and blood?
 'Tigers disguised, that borrow human shape
 'Wider to spread their desolating sway.

'All who confront, in the minute degree 775
 'Their will,—the sovereign arbiters of fate,
 'Are thrown without thy pale—Humanity!
 'And must be scourged, tormented, driven from life,
 'Whilst fierce-eyed Superstition claps her hands.
 'These charges not alike to all pertain,— 780

'To *Laics*, but their *Priests* ; from earliest years,
 'In each intol'rant path preeminent !
 'Prompt at all times, to hunt, to crush, their foes :
 'Who never yet, at Mercy's call, withheld
 'Inflictions, such as stones might move to tears. 785

'Britain, beware ! There is a leaven at work !
 ' *Priestcraft*, with nightly vigils, broods unseen !
 'It heaves the social system, and, alone,
 '(Whate'er they say of alter'd purposes)
 'Needs but the *power* to light the faggot pile— 790
 'To scatter round them vengeance,—God to please !
 '(That God a god of mercy !) who again
 'Would forge the chain ; once more would re-assert
 '(With rage augmented for repressions past,)
 'Their lost dominion, and,—true *Antichrist* ! 795
 'Without one pang repulsive from the heart,
 'Doom all to death who own not *Papal Rome* !

'Wolves changed to lambs ! These ravagers of earth,
 'With all the mild exterior Falsehood bears,
 'Oft as Dissemblance whispers—*Interest* near, 800
 'Claim kindred with the *Fisherman* !—descent
 'In the continuous line—immaculate,
 'From *one* bright Herald of a world unseen !
 'Oh ! falsehood, worthy of its source, beneath !
 'If *Peter* from the tomb could lift his voice, 805
 'How would he spurn th' assumed affinity !
 'Call *him* their prototype, their ancestor ;—
 'Source of their *unction*—to the end of time !
 'This *priestly* dogma, cast it to the winds !
 'How should *they* claim an ancestry so pure, 810
 '(Themselves—transcendent in impurities !)
 'How see in twilight, and the depths of night ?
 'Lie ! broach'd at first by *Priests*, by *Priests* upheld !

' To prove their hollow hearts,—the violence
 ' Offer'd to sacred Truth, they evermore, 815
 ' As to the only test legitimate,
 ' Turn to the *Church* The Church ! the Church ! they cry.
 ' Christ may declare, and Paul reiterate,
 ' But this is naught ! The ultimate appeal,—
 ' The word that binds, the law that regulates, 820
 ' Is *human*, not *divine* ! what *man* affirms
 ' Claims deference ; what th' inspired of God may say
 ' Small weight receives, Mandates, tho' luminous,
 ' Unless they favour *Priests*, will be pronounced
 ' (By those who live to torture, not to clear) 825
 ' Obscure, and inadmissible. The church
 ' Will own no records that impeach her ways.

' What is this mighty Church, o'ershadowing Earth,
 ' Calling her princes vassals, dealing out
 ' The *Medean* law ; professing to proclaim 830
 ' Christ's advent, and, in all its loveliness,
 ' To teach, and practise, what their Lord enjoin'd ?
 ' Judge, thoughtful man. He who the mandate gave,—
 ' Be not ye ' *Rabbi* ' call'd : has he not lost
 ' The power to rule ; the sway, that once he own'd ? 835
 ' Now all are Rabbies ! Rabbies ! He enjoin'd
 ' Meekness and lowliness. He charged his friends
 ' To raise their hopes above the *temporal* ;
 ' Treasure to seek in Heaven ; to hold as light
 ' Earth's glittering toys, its pomps and vanities. 840
 ' Far other statutes now precedence claim.
 ' I see the followers of their lowly Lord,
 ' (Whom we adore, the God-head manifest)
 ' Lifting the lofty look, and, as their due,
 ' Demanding honours, and the prostrate knee ! 845
 ' Like kings, surrounded with imperial state !
 ' What contrast here ! They vow to follow *Him*—
 ' The Lord of all ! who with the sovereign word

'Disease arrested ! sight to blindness gave !
 'The storm assuaged, the sea, with,—'Peace, be still !' 850
 'He had not where to lay his head ! He check'd
 'Ascriptions, proffer'd honours, praise from man,
 'And taught humility.

'His followers now,
 'Th' expounders of his statutes consecrate,
 'Far other versions give—to words so plain.— 855
 '(Showing their competence to judge aright !)
 'Forgetful of instructions, once enforced,
 'Those who can riches grasp, and rise to power,
 'In a peculiar, and conspicuous sense,
 'The *Seven-hilled Lords* ! (and some of lower name, 860
 'Kindred in spirit, humbler in degree)
 'Would stretch their arms, and call the earth their own !

'I see descendants of the fishermen,—
 'Aspiring *Priests*, in princely guise, and raised
 'To giddy elevations:—perilous, 865
 'As once believed, but now in softer light
 'Regarded : freed from antiquated laws.
 'They now aspire to rank, and lux'ry prize !
 'Hold friendship with the world, while *one* assumes,
 '(Th' Apostles' representative below !) 870
 'E'en homage, due alone to Deity !]
 'High state is his. I see him now enthroned,—
 'The *Papacy* !—that one who was, who is !
 'His days are number'd !—and, like Lucifer,
 'Time hastes,—when he shall fall to rise no more ! 875
 'I see this Babylonian potentate,
 'Deck'd in the gorgeous Cope, the Tyrian Vest,
 'The grand Tiara, and the Triple Crown,—
 'Guards hovering round, and pacing palaces—
 'With lordly exultation !—Dust of earth ! 880
 'The tree is fell'd that shall thy coffin form,—
 'Worms for their feast impatient.

- ' Cloud on cloud
 ' Still gathers round !—This grand interpreter ;—
 ' This *Papacy* ! so freed from human taint, 885
 ' (Whose very errors are infallible)
 ' Invents new falsehoods : some of direst name.
 ' I see the senseless crowd,—turn from their God,
 ' And sins *confess to man* !—receive his balm
 ' To cure a wounded conscience ; coveting, 890
 ' As the effectual antidote of guilt,
 ' *His* absolution !—Sinner, he himself,
 ' (Oft, monster in iniquity !) yet fools,
 ' Abject as dust, crowd his Confessional,
 ' And, pardon from high Heaven imploring not, 895
 ' Seek it from Artifice and Hypocrites !
 ' Searcher of hearts ! burst this satanic spell !
 ' Hence, let the sinner look to Calvary !
 ' And (penitent) alone to God repair !

 ' New crimes arise, revolting, gross, and vile ! 900
 ' Denounced by every page of sacred writ.
 ' I hear the voice (perversion horrible !)
 ' The voice of suppliants, in their hour of woe,
 ' Earnest, address'd to *her*, accredited,
 ' As owning sway, conjoin'd with Deity ! 905
 ' The Son, the Father, these (subordinates !)
 ' Precedence yield, to prayers, importunate,
 ' Raised to the Virgin Mother !—Flesh and blood
 ' The child of dust !—yet, first of woman kind,
 ' And honour'd, for the honour she sustain'd, 910
 ' But, *nothing more*. Beyond it brings the charge—
 ' Abhor'd of Heaven, *Idolatry* !—What line
 ' In Peter's precious legacy, enjoins
 ' So black an act, as worship paid to man,
 ' To woman, sun, or star, or creeping thing ? 915
 ' Like Jews of old, *Priests* make the Great Supreme
 ' Like to themselves, *their* passions, thoughts, and ways !—

'Jehovah *King* of Heaven, and Mary *Queen* !
 'Dread blasphemy ! confounding God with man !
 'This *Priest-taught* fallacy !—this abject faith ! 920
 'This phantom ! as the human mind expands,
 'Fast hast'ning, like a scroll, shall pass away !

'Turning to Antichrist, the Man of Sin,
 'Of old predicted, and now realized.
 '(The system, not the individual, charged) 925
 'Thou hast denounced, with an excess of zeal,
 '(To vulgar eyes) the reading of *that Book*,
 'Made for all ranks, and suited for all climes ;
 'Giv'n as the sinner's best inheritance.
 'Prized is it, by the wise, the good, the pure, 930
 'Who look beyond earth's perishable forms,
 'And, grateful to the Highest, there receive
 'Tidings of happier realms, and brighter skies.
 'Why *hide* this treasure from man's fallen race ?
 'Some secret object, powerful end, must prompt— 935
 'Deed so adverse to holiest charity.
 'What ? Who will say ?—Truth, bold-eyed, blazons it.

'Th' obnoxious book presents no aspect kind
 'Toward thy deceptions ! Rather, with a frown,
 'It strips thy veil, and shows thee, as thou art, 940
 'Degenerate, and corrupted to the core !
 'Amid th' apparent heedlessness of pelf,
 'Whose every thought revolves on gold, how best—
 'Wealth to extract from terror, and mankind
 'Keep groping in the dark, lest merchandize— 945
 'So precious ! light, with wings, should bear away.

Oh ! does that manual, in its every page,
 'Denounce thy vain oblations, and thy ways ?
 'Thou lov'st it not !—The menace dread is there !
 'Thou must conceal the harsh, th' accusing line ! 950

‘ Smother its clear rebukes, that none may know—
 ‘ Thy countless wanderings from Heaven’s oracles !

‘ Wise in thy generation,—Lucre-wise !
 ‘ With an intensity of zeal, thou striv’st
 ‘ To shroud this lamp of truth,—so to enforce 955
 ‘ Thine own vain fancies, prescripts, doctrines, lies.
 ‘ Thou giv’st to hungry souls the frothy food,
 ‘ The tinkling bell ! the incense rising high !
 ‘ The flaming tapers ! Relics false, (if true,
 ‘ Worthless as weeds that perish in the sun) 960
 ‘ And pouring tawdry garments on the sight !
 ‘ Wonder is none, that thou should’st interdict,
 ‘ And shroud this hostile Book, so to enforce
 ‘ Thy senseless bendings, vain observances,
 ‘ Mock’ry of sacred things ! by wisdom spurn’d ! 965
 ‘ That taint the mind, that paralyze the heart,
 ‘ And shadows for the substance give to man !
 ‘ Strive on, and see if Heaven will prosper thee !
 ‘ Efforts redouble ! Fiercer zeal display,—
 ‘ To hide this Book ; t’ obscure its heavenly rays, 970
 ‘ The only guide to mortals voyaging
 ‘ Life’s stormy ocean ! Pole-star, Light Divine !
 ‘ Which night transforms to Faith’s meridian day !

‘ From the *Seven Hills* the wave-like impulse flows. 975
 ‘ Afar, thro’ every land instructors spread
 ‘ To teach truths fundamental. Listening crowds
 ‘ Now mark their precepts, anxious to be told
 ‘ How future woes to ’scape, and Heaven obtain.
 ‘ Their maxim *first* is heard. “ Mind thou thy *Priest* !— 980
 ‘ He stands instead of God, and reverence claims !
 ‘ My sacred rites regard ! On Mary call—
 ‘ Protector of the faithful !—Queen of Heaven !
 ‘ Cross with the hallow’d water ! Count thy beads !
 ‘ But, above all, *sacred*, this warning hold ; 985

"Touch not the *Bible*! By our Church pronounced
 "Dang'rous, and interdicted!—hazardous
 "To all but Priests! Its honey, we alone
 "Safely may gather! Leave the *task* to us!
 "Then trust to thy Confession! be Absolved! 990
 "And Heaven is doubly sure!"—The Gospel this!
 'For which Apostles toiled, and Martyrs bled!
 'Thus is Heaven's precious Book, man's hope and joy,—
 'By *Antichrist*,—spurn'd,—trodden 'neath the feet!

'There are, who would in ten-fold darkness hide 995
 'This star, refulgent, scattering o'er the world
 'A light divine, which cheers each pilgrim's heart;—
 'Teaching to live, and showing how to die!
 'There *are*, who would this Sun of Righteousness
 'Blot out, or keep its radiance to themselves— 1000
 'The better to dispense their fallacies;
 'Who, to expiring man, would dare obtrude,
 'As the superior way to heavenly joys,
 'Their twilight rays! Their moon-beam glimmerings!
 'Speaking themselves, while God, even God, is mute! 1005
 'Most perilous rebellion 'gainst the Highest!
 'Regardless of that clear and stern behest,—
 'The Scriptures search!'—These strive unceasingly
 '(For all the virtual purposes of life)
 'To drive the Scriptures from the light of day! 1010
 'Their pure and healing waters, their commands,
 'To merge in Rites of *heathenish* origin!
 'And with imposing pomp and circumstance,
 'Instead of statutes, fresh from paradise,
 'To urge their own chimeras: as of yore 1015
 'Their great design, and ever uppermost,—
 '(Absorbing thoughts by day, and dreams by night)
 'How best to raise their Order—swell their ranks,
 'And, in the surest way, effectual forge—
 'Fetters for man and mind!—Great Lord of All! 1020

‘ Their veil remove ! Their darkness dissipate !
 ‘ Their sins forgive ! And may Thy Bread of Life,
 ‘ Free as the air, extend the World around !

- ‘ What were the merits of that financier— 1025
 ‘ That genius, whose creative mind devised
 ‘ First, pray’rs for the defunct, that mine of wealth—
 ‘ To subtile *Priests*,—those mammon worshippers !
 ‘ Now Vice and Villany, on easy terms
 ‘ May penal sufferance ’scape, and Heaven secure ! 1030
 ‘ If wealth be his,—*leave* liberally to *Priests*,
 ‘ And with the Testament well ratified
 ‘ The work is done ! The ordinary bar
 ‘ One *Priest* may overcome, but if the case
 ‘ Desp’rate be found, the *team* must instantly 1035
 ‘ Receive auxiliary aid. A Second *Priest*
 ‘ Must be well paid, and their united force
 ‘ Their powerful prayers, would drag an elephant
 ‘ From Satan’s clutch. Th’ imperial sinner now
 ‘ Feels satisfied. The will is codicill’d ; 1040
 ‘ The purchase specified, when once again,
 ‘ The anxious *Priest*, solicitous to save
 ‘ From torments, one so generous, and so *rich*,
 ‘ Suggests, perchance to his bed-ridden friend,
 ‘ That certainty more certain might be made, 1045
 ‘ By payment *doubled*, so as to secure
 ‘ A *whole year’s prayers*. All this with *Mary’s* smiles,
 ‘ So pleased with benefactors to the Church !
 ‘ At once would send him safe to paradise !—
- ‘ These soul-destroying *Priests* their callings ply 1050
 ‘ With an avidity, a grasping zeal,
 ‘ Worthy the Prince,—the Master whom they serve.
 ‘ And there are countless forms who walk the earth,
 ‘ With limbs and features, all external marks
 ‘ Of manhood,—failing but in intellect— 1055

' (Illumin'd by the only source of light !)
 ' These, with the mind's prostration, can believe,
 ' And in their abjectness, can tolerate—
 ' This *Priestcraft*, which reflection casts on man !

' Beneath the spell of Guile, Credulity 1060
 ' No limit knows. *Priests* to collect their pelf,
 ' Offer, and fools believe them, for a sum
 ' Told down in ample tale, and sterling coin,
 ' To grant,—Oh ! mournful, melancholy truth !
 ' To grant *Indulgence* ! This high privilege 1065
 ' *Affluence* alone may reach ; the refuse *Poor*
 ' Who cannot purchase, must endure their pangs,
 ' With pity none :—remediless, deserved !
 ' But men of wealth,—their spirits set on sin
 ' For every crime, *Indulgence* may obtain,— 1070
 ' Thro' costly interventions ;—*Lands* and *Gold*,
 ' Proportion'd to th' offence ;—this, equity
 ' Plainly prescribes,—the *scale* by *Priests* laid down
 ' With an exactitude,—which blazons forth
 ' Man's folly, and the deep confed'racy 1075
 ' By Artifice concocted, which rescinds,
 ' Without a qualm, th' Eternal laws of Heaven.
 ' The Church thus fills her coffers !—Haste the day !
 ' When God, insulted, shall illume the eyes
 ' Of blinded mortals, and this *Priestcraft* vile, 1080
 ' Sweep from the earth, with all its frauds and lies !

' But tho' this Book, by goodness infinite
 ' To man confided, as the sun-beam clear,
 ' Instructs, and in all circumstance, directs 1085
 ' To peace and happiness ; perversity
 ' Blinds many a mind. Disastrous spectacle !—
 ' Amid earth's erring children, some there are
 ' High in their own esteem, who can descant
 ' (The feeblest doubt a stranger to their breast)

- 'Alike on secular, or sacred things, 1090
 'On learned points, or questions recondite,
 'With tone and confidence oracular :
 '(When sager minds are absent) who behold
 'All nature plain before them ! These assume
 'Light super-human, and pronounce themselves 1095
 'Wisdom's interpreters.—Inflated thus
 'With vanity ;—that abject littleness !
 'Which tempts the feeble to regard as fix'd
 'Whate'er their roving fancy advocates,
 'Altho' opposed by minds of largest grasp, 1100
 'The pride of other ages and their own.
 'Twilight with them exceeds meridian day ;
 'Their word, their dictum, is the only law ;
 'The source of truth, the ultimate appeal ;
 'And all mankind are fools and hypocrites, 1105
 'Wand'ring in rayless night, save they, and theirs !

- 'These from their tower of eminence, look down,
 'Contemptuous, on the faith, taught by that Book,
 'By them, deemed valueless !—Oh, madness strange !
 'Pouring disdain on that, which was, which is, 1110
 'And ever will be, till the last loud trump,
 'The choicest treasure, man can call his own.
 'Such fearless confidence, such calm repose,
 'Rests on their minds, that—all inculcated
 'In creeds religious, is but fallacy ;— 1115
 'Th' enthusiast's dream ! fit but for intellects
 'Less tutor'd and robust than theirs. They look
 'With silent pity on the crowds around
 'Who, from futurity, expect that good
 'Fate here denies them. Not vociferous ; 1120
 'They keep the precious treasure to themselves ;
 'Nurse it with fondness, and to silence sworn,
 '(Lest general frowns should point, and follow them)
 'Laugh, unobserved, alike, at faith and hope.

' These claim *some* merit. Other Infidels 1125
 ' Active are found, these passive, who alone
 ' Go down to death, not poisoning other minds,
 ' Save, haply, by their practice, with the hope—
 ' Oh, abject spirits ! with the fervent hope,
 ' They all shall perish utterly ! But if, 1130
 ' (No certainty can banish creeping doubt !)
 ' If—dread alternative ! there *should* be found
 ' A world hereafter !—State succeeding this !
 ' A God of justice, who of human ways
 ' Takes cognizance ! who will his servants bless ! 1135
 ' His foes reject as chaff ! their refuge—where ?
 ' What shelter shall secure them from the blast ?

' Others there are of deeper turpitude,
 ' Loud in hostility to God and Truth.
 ' Who force their maxims,—dark conceits, on all ; 1140
 ' The spurners of the Sacred Oracles !
 ' Often, by Heaven's appointment, *in themselves*,
 ' Presenting both the *bane* and *antidote* !
 ' Strangers to peace,—austere,—irascible ;—
 ' No hope to call the kindlier feelings forth. 1145

' These wand'ring spirits, foes to God and man,
 ' Urged by th' Infernal Powers, strive hard to plunge
 ' Into their own abyss of wretchedness
 ' Unwary list'ners, who, in evil hour,
 ' Smiled on their impious railings. Wrapt in night, 1150
 ' These pioneers of death, these advocates
 ' Of maxims rife in hell, contemptuous gaze
 ' On the meek followers of the Nazarene !
 ' And, in their own preeminence secure,
 ' Regard them, as beguiled, distemper'd, blind. 1155

' Soon will their triumphs cease. These lucid guides,
 ' Munificent in pride, ere long will feel

- 'Th' envenom'd sting ; rage rankling at their heart,
 ' When (stripp'd of their delusions) they behold
 ' Those whom they spurn'd as senseless, proved to be 1160
 ' The only wise and provident, who lived
 ' With a prospective eye to things unseen ;
 ' Like sojourners on earth, intent to gain
 ' That land delectable, those fountains pure,
 ' Flowing with new delights ; those jasper gates, 1165
 ' And amaranthine bowers, where Concord reigns,
 ' With Love, its native element, whilst there
 ' Thro' the wide region, in one note of praise,
 ' God, and the Lamb are worshipp'd.
 ' Saints on earth, 1170
 ' Before translated to the heavenly choir,
 ' By faith sustain'd, toiled thro' their thorny way.
 ' Confiding in th' Eternal Word, they met,
 ' Unmoved, the scoffer's taunt, the railer's frown,
 ' Charged often with disdain, or outrage fierce, 1175
 ' (Hostile to flesh and blood) yet still their steps
 ' Press'd toward the mark in sight, and for the curse
 ' Return'd the blessing. Now the fruits appear ;
 ' Sow'd oft in sighs, and water'd with their tears.
 ' Was it an evil choice ? Say, Spirits Bless'd ! 1180
 ' Your highest hopes exceeded !—do you mourn,
 ' Now shelter'd from the beating storms of life,
 ' Safe in the heavenly haven, do you mourn
 ' Your preference of Eternity to Time ?
 ' Say ! Patriarch, and Prophets ! (round the throne, 1185
 ' Cleans'd, sanctified, redeem'd !) do you deplore
 ' The road you trod,—that led to realms on high ?
 ' Say ! Martyrs ! who, the raging flames endured,
 ' And smiled at your tormentors, heaven in sight,
 ' Now crown'd with starry diadems, and born 1190
 ' To an enduring heritage ! do you,
 ' With backward glance, look sad and wistfully
 ' Upon your mortal path ? your vale of tears ?

- 'Turning from earthly toys, you lived to rear
 'An empire in the skies, that fadeth not. 1195
 'Ambitious of the vast, you aim'd to share
 'Communion with archangels; to acquire,
 'And call your own, with tenure permanent,
 'Mansions of bliss, and joys for evermore !
- 'Glancing at that assemblage of all things 1200
 'Most awful, when before assembled worlds
 'Judgment, that changes not, shall be pronounced
 'On all the generations of mankind ;
 'Many, I see, in the prophetic glance,
 'With rage ineffable, view those, to whom, 1205
 'Thro' sophisms, impious railings, jest, and jeer,
 'They owed their hopeless banishment from Heaven.
 'And if the Lost, with the indignant rage
 'View their Destroyers, what the gratitude,
 'The praise, exceeding thought, that, from the heart, 1210
 'The Saved and sanctified, will pour, on those—
 'Who first alarm'd them in the downward path ?
 'Who, (as th' appointed instruments of Heaven)
 'Drew them from Nature's darkness, and their feet
 'Turn'd to the Path of Life!—One soul to save 1215
 'Is mightier honour—than to conquer worlds.
- 'Where now the triumphs of the Atheist crew ?
 'Who, dead themselves to goodness, sought to drag
 'All others down, to their own abjectness.
 'What changes here ! Behold the darken'd minds 1220
 'Who Time adored, and Mammon made their God !
 'How are they fall'n !—Their very proselytes
 'Reville them ! spurn them ! charge their wretchedness
 'On *their* Satanic influence ;—perchance,
 'On pages, poisonous as the adder's tongue ! 1225
 'Or on their oral fallacies, pour'd forth
 'In voluble excess ; the fruit alone

' Of blind impenitence. In vain for them
 ' The Saviour of the World, invited, warn'd ;
 ' They turn'd from him, and now he turns from them. 1230
 ' They also sow'd, and as they sow'd, they reap !

' These slaves of sense, these idol-worshippers,
 ' Drown'd in intemp'rance, riot-loving souls ;
 ' Or those less rude, who in frivolity
 ' Waste the most precious treasure earth contains, 1235
 ' *Time* ! short at longest ; plunging, heedlessly,
 ' Into all subjects, with a senseless zest,
 ' An intrepidity ; with nought too small,
 ' Too evanescent, or identified
 ' With the minute, the trifling, or the vain— 1240
 ' To rouse their passions.—But, solitudes
 ' Fix'd on th' Eternal State succeeding this,
 ' So near ! so certain ! they, disdainful, thrust,
 ' Heedless, away ; pertaining not to them !
 ' Say, are not men, with all their loftiness, 1245
 ' Lull'd, dreaming ; in the depths of sleep ! A sight
 ' Which fills the world of spirits with amaze !

' But death will come, delusion to remove ;
 ' The trying moment, when all forms assume
 ' Their real worth. These heroes resolute, 1250
 ' Undaunted by the Highest's loudest threats,
 ' Oft have I seen astounded, terror-struck,
 ' When smitten by distemper ; cheerless, sad—
 ' Upon the couch of loneliness ;—the crew,
 ' (Not friends) companions in their revelry, 1255
 ' Heart-sickening metamorphose ! now become
 ' Distasteful, or, revolting, each to each.

' Where now your boast, your vaunted confidence
 ' Despisers of the still small voice of Truth ?
 ' Where are the props which were to solace you 1260

‘Provision for the state that knows no end.

‘Tho’ scoffers, in their pride, defiance breathe,
 ‘And laugh at danger, yet, adversity
 ‘Hangs on their rear.—There is a World of Woe 1300
 ‘Far off from blessedness, and where, too late !
 ‘Men, making Earth, their home, their heritage,
 ‘Confess their madness, whilst the gnashing teeth
 ‘Betrays the pang, the worm that dieth not !
 ‘Tho’ infidels deride ; there is a world, 1305
 ‘Out in blank space. where the iniquitous
 ‘In heart and life, the enemies of Truth,
 ‘With fellow outcasts live ! What thought may reach,
 ‘What heart conceive, the import of those words,—
 ‘*Banish’d from God !*—excluded, permanent,— 1310
 ‘From *Him*, the source of bliss and blessedness !
 ‘From intercourse, and all communion sweet
 ‘With saint and seraphim ;—th’ illustrious hosts
 ‘Gather’d from every age, and gathering still,
 ‘And still to gather, till the Trump of God 1315
 ‘Thunders the knell of Time. —

‘Is goodness here,—

‘The lovely, peaceful, and compassionate,
 ‘Sweet to the pure in heart ? What world is that
 ‘Where all is goodness, purity, and truth ! 1320
 ‘Frailty and imperfection, shaken off,
 ‘The dust of earth ; and perpetuity,
 ‘Increasing still, of rest, and peace, and joy !
 ‘Is this the prize presented ? Does the heart
 ‘Glow with intense desire *that* bliss to share— 1325
 ‘Provided by the Sinner’s Advocate
 ‘For all who love and serve him ? Who would risk
 ‘Treasure so priceless, for the husks of Earth ?
 ‘Who ?—but the crowds that for the *present* live
 ‘And for the *future* feel, nor dread, nor care ! 1330

' I see rebellious spirits borne away
 ' From God and glory ! *There* is banishment !
 ' (As when the sun withdraws, and all is night !)
 ' The import of that word, how terrible !
 ' Expell'd from heaven, and its felicities !— 1335
 ' From Zion's Mount,—the New Jerusalem !
 ' A severance from the Spirits of the Just !
 ' There leave them.—If excluded from His smile,
 ' In whom alone, fulness of joy is found,
 ' Thro' willing darkness, blind impenitence, 1340
 ' And all the deeds that from rebellion flow,
 ' The scorpion sting of Conscience them will pierce !
 ' Whilst, to augment their pungency of woe,
 ' Their old companions, choice associates, friends,—
 ' Foes rather, in disguise, that lured to death ! 1345
 ' Will each, on each, pour contumely and scorn !
 ' Seen in new light, and darker for the change !—
 ' The dream-like charm that dazzled, pass'd away !
 ' Strange sight ! Each now would *shun*, whom once he *sought*,
 ' Yet are they bound, by laws immutable, 1350
 ' To those they *hate* ! while in their hopeless rage,
 ' They cast an envious eye on happier realms,
 ' Far off, and on their bright inhabitants,
 ' With the wide gulf impassable between !

' These lived for self alone. The things they sought, 1355
 ' With a supreme solicitude, they gain'd ;—
 ' The fleeting pleasures of a summer's day !
 ' But hours of blandishment pass rapidly.
 ' Eve soon arrives ! They had their hearts' desire,
 ' And with it,—an inheritance of woe ! 1360
 ' The warnings of a thousand monitors,
 ' All was despised !

' The downward road commenced,
 ' Progress increases, like the wintry ball ;
 ' From light to twilight ; darkness then succeeds. 1365

' Now to appease th' accusing voice within,—
 ' Importunate, an effort grand is made
 ' To hold alliance with the Infidel ;—
 ' To summons from their caverns deep, the men
 ' Distinguish'd for their dark preeminence ! 1370
 ' Famed for their prowess !—fearless to assail,
 ' With rage implacable, the Word of Life !—
 ' And all that sunshine o'er the future casts.

' To wield their weapons, the Novitiates, find
 ' Hard, cumbrous and unyielding, but, at length 1375
 ' (To every callous and perverted heart)
 ' Obstructions end in triumph. Doubt, at first,
 ' Soon ripens into confidence. Their course
 ' Now bolder grows.—The grand, the clearest truths
 ' Enforc'd of Holy Writ, (that precious boon !) 1380
 ' They jeer at, and the flimsy arguments,
 ' A thousand times refuted, to their minds,
 ' Come with a freshness, point, and cogency,
 ' That wins conviction ; (no achievement hard !
 ' So docile is the spirit, once embued 1385
 ' With hate of Truth !) In their enlighten'd creed,
 ' Now perfect !—*Satan* is an empty tale !
 ' The lie inspired of Satan !—who beholds
 ' Such, as his choicest agents, staunch, and sound,
 ' Who, to explore their own drear labyrinths, 1390
 ' Hazard, dread thought ! their future all,—that all,
 ' The hope of Heaven !—The friendship of their God !

' Advancing in Deception's bold career,
 ' (Twin wand'ers, and associates ever found)
 ' These spirits, lost in Error's sinuous ways, 1395
 ' Now spurn at *Hell*, and spite of obstacles,
 ' (If of another world they *dare* to think)
 ' Send all to heaven !—miscreant and parricide,
 ' (After a shadowy cleansing, small and brief)

' With the whole brood of darkness, Belial' Sons ! 1400
 ' Blasphemers stout, conjoin'd with reprobates !
 ' No doubtful point, or nice contingency,
 ' All soon to join in equal rank and joy !—
 ' Prophets, Apostles, Saints,—the Vile, the Base !
 ' Each greeting each ;—grand confraternity !— 1405
 ' The whole fast hastening on to Paradise !

' Those daring spirits deign not to *implore* ;
 ' They claim, as their indisputable *right*,
 ' Entrance to Heaven. The pearly gates to them
 ' *Must* open stand, and the Supreme himself 1410
 ' Salute his bold intruders ! When on earth,
 ' The prince who scatter'd houses, gold, or lands,
 ' Profusely, they might supplicate, and know
 ' The boon they sought, the owner might deny ;
 ' But the Eternal Ruler, on whose word 1415
 ' All nature hangs, he *must* his empire yield
 ' To Rebels ! Heaven's untold felicities,
 ' (All unprepared) in their presumptuous dreams,
 ' They take by storm, and deem the Highest bound,
 ' Thro' their imagined worth and worthiness, 1420
 ' To welcome them ; to bid his saints stand by
 ' At their approach ; to ope his choicest stores,
 ' And bless them with his smiles. Are these their hopes ?
 ' Delusion, leagued with death ! A few short years,
 ' And this aspiring, proud, irruptive Band, 1425
 ' In their vain fancies, by their native might,
 ' Forcing an entrance to the Realms of Bliss,
 ' Will find, to their confusion, but too late !
 ' God can reward his Friends,—reject his Foes !—
 ' What that comprises they must die to learn ! 1430

' Th' assurance that all tend to heaven at last,
 ' Alike the pure in heart, the rebel host !—
 ' Blackest of falsehoods ! Pregnant with all ill !

' Casting the threats of Heaven to moles and bats !
 ' Teaching the bad to glory in their shame !— 1435
 ' To tread, with an unshrinking confidence,
 ' The paths of the destroyer ; yet, in truth,
 ' Most soothing *creed* !—for *those* so zealously
 ' All creeds denouncing ! for, if *all*, at last,
 ' Meet in Heaven's Regions, they *themselves* are safe. 1440
 ' They must be one—where *all* are brought to bliss !

' Here, there is *hope*, but least of all for those
 ' Who brave the threat'nings of th' Omnipotent !
 ' Condition—reckless—piteous—perilous !
 ' These by their words, in union with their lives, 1445
 ' Scatter around them withering pestilence,—
 ' The bane most fatal, that which slays the soul !—
 ' Which drags immortals down from hope and heaven.
 ' A ponderous load, and crushing, these sustain ;—
 ' The weight of blood !—of others, and their own ! 1450

' These wiser than the wisest, now assail
 ' Truth with augmented rage. They pour contempt
 ' On Christ th' Anointed Son, the Sinner's Friend !
 ' The Christian's only refuge ! They pronounce
 ' Him whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain ! 1455
 ' Impostor, and his words and records, vain !
 ' Deny his Resurrection ! deem his laws
 (' A sacred halo round them, cloth'd in light !)
 ' A system of deception !—falsehood, all !—
 ' Deep under-plot, pursued from sire to son, 1460
 ' From age to age ;—confederate scheme, to cheat
 ' A senseless, credulous, lie-loving world !
 ' Fierce in their enmity, they daringly
 ' Turn their deaf ear to all the Spirit taught,—
 ' Breath'd thro' Apostles ;—who, to verify— 1465
 ' That Gospel, sent in mercy to mankind,
 ' Endured a scoffing world, and, fearless, braved,

- ' In utterance of their mission from on high,
 ' Slander, the prison's gloom, the scourge, the chain,
 ' The rav'nous beast, the stake ! the crucifix !— 1470
 ' Can men belie their conscience, and believe
 ' These Martyrs, banded all, to propagate
 ' Falsehood ?—and sealing with their blood,—a lie ?
 ' Delusion here prevails. It reaches not
 ' Beyond Earth's confines. 1475
 ' Beings, shorn of heaven,
 ' Dread thought ! confined by bars impassable,
 ' At length bewail their madness, yet retain
 ' 'Gainst God and Goodness, Truth and Holiness,
 ' The enmity which banish'd them from bliss ! 1480
 ' Their friends and advocates on earth, the men—
 ' Hast'ning to join them, (all unconscious they !)
 ' In wanderings still advance.—They spurn the hope,
 ' Kindled of Revelation,—rapturous thought !
 ' Of rising to new life, when leaving Time ;— 1485
 ' The glorious dawn of Immortality !
 ' This they disdainful scoff at. They like beasts
 ' First lived, and then like beasts desired to die !—
 ' Vain hope ! The hour of Retribution hastens fast !

 ' The anxious mind inquires, Why were these ills 1490
 ' Engrafted on our nature ? Why did Heaven
 ' Afflict the world with *Antichrist* ?—allow
 ' The *Papists*' triumph and supremacy ?
 ' Such source of outrage, cruelty, and strife !
 ' Why was the *Infidel* allowed to rise, 1495
 ' To spread his noxious errors ? to proclaim
 ' His poisonous words, that like the Desert-blasts
 ' Are leagued with death !
 ' Pause, daring Spirit !—Say !
 ' Can the slow-creeping earth-worm judge of man ?— 1500
 ' His thoughts explore ?—his motives comprehend ?
 ' Yet worms know more of men, than men of God !

'Can mortals, with their few and feeble thoughts,
 'Explore the boundless?—trace the Infinite?
 'Th' Eternal spake, when, lo! the Universe 1505
 'Majestic rose! Still limitless in power,
 'He regulates the least concerns of man!
 'He, in the dark recesses of his mind,
 'Nurtures all plans that germinate on Earth;
 'Some, quick in their development, some late,— 1510
 'Thro' ages drawing to maturity:
 'Some, intertwined, and seeming, e'en to us,
 'Perplex'd, confused, or tending to conserve
 'The adverse purpose, yet, harmoniously,
 'The *end* (The only test of value true) 1515
 'Proves worthy of a God!—That plastic mind,—
 'Extends its sway, with an intensity
 'Of close inspection, that combines, alike,
 'The great, the small; the vastest, and the least!—
 'Systems, or atoms!—All alike to Him 1520
 'Who made, inspects, ordains, and governs All!
 'Trust Him in all things!—Silently adore!

'But turning to the bright entablature,—
 'Whereon Beneficence inscribes her laws;
 'Look thou around on Nature's lovely face: 1525
 'There read perfection! Here the God-head shines!
 'All things alike, within thee, and around,—
 'With voice articulate,—to the mind's ear,
 'Proclaim his Goodness,—boundless as his Power!
 'To cheer Earth's mourning spirits, God is Love!— 1530
 'First, and most hallow'd of Immortal Truths!
 'What thoughtful heart can doubt it?

'Where is he—

'Who in the silent solitary hour,
 'When meditation reigns, can look around 1535
 'On all life's wondrous objects, and still doubt
 'The love of him who made them? Every form,

- ' Throughout all nature, opes its hundred mouths
 ' To sound his praise. Yet not on man alone
 ' God heaps his favour. From the o'erflowing spring 1540
 ' Of heavenly goodness, Earth's vast family
 ' Drink their refreshing draughts. Th' Eternal Sire,
 ' Fountain of love! Sun of the Universe!
 ' Looks round upon the creatures he has made,
 ' And where he looks, spontaneous pleasures rise 1545
 ' And melting harmonies! What less than God,
 ' And Goodness Infinite, could bid the train
 ' Of beauteous flowers adorn this lower earth;—
 ' Could make its secret caverns, and the host
 ' Of stately trees, diverse, conspire to swell, 1550
 ' The sum of human blessings? What but power
 ' Surpassing thought, could fill Heaven's boundless vault
 ' With stars innumerable, blazing on their way,
 ' Sole emblem of stability on earth!
 ' Rolling th' eternal course! What less than God 1555
 ' Could clothe the Eve with glory, or the Morn,
 ' Slow-opening, steep'd in her transcendent dyes!
 ' Could make the Seasons run their endless race,
 ' And give to Life interminable bounds,
 ' Bidding the air above, the earth beneath, 1560
 ' The ocean teem with creatures, who exist,
 ' Unconscious of existence, their brief hour,
 ' And best display their unknown gratitude
 ' In being happy. Doubt not God is Love!

 ' And when thou turnest thy contemplant mind, 1565
 ' From God in Nature, to that vast expanse,—
 ' Dimming the sight, where e'en th' angelic mind
 ' Is lost in wonder! God in Providence,—
 ' Moulding Earth's jarring atoms, to promote
 ' His secret, and inscrutable designs, 1570
 ' How wondrous, and o'erwhelming is the thought!
 ' In darkest hour, trust that Almighty Hand

' So manifest in seasons numberless,
 ' That he will guide thee, till thou reach that state
 ' Where faith expires in sight. How should thy soul 1575
 ' Expand with gratitude, for that high gift,—
 ' Its magnitude, not uttered by man's speech !
 ' The hope of an Hereafter !—the belief,
 ' *Founded on God's good Word*, that thou wilt yet
 ' Survive the wreck of Nature, and enjoy 1580
 ' The Father of thy spirit, in a world
 ' Where blessedness prevails ! where Jesus reigns !
 ' Where sin will be no more ! and God himself !
 ' Shall wipe the final tear from every eye !

' And can that God whose attribute is Love, 1585
 ' Whose whole creation teems with happiness,
 ' (Save where the moral taint deforms the scene)
 ' Delight in morbid feelings, and the heart
 ' That loves to pore on misery and night,—
 ' No good beholding ? Can th' Almighty Sire, 1590
 ' Well pleased, behold the creatures he has made
 ' Cherish suspicions of himself, and though—
 ' Nurs'd in the lap of comfort, all pass by
 ' To languish o'er ideal wretchedness ;
 ' Sigh all the day, and murmur thro' the night, 1595
 ' Unmindful of the blessings infinite
 ' That crowd around them ?—Sufferers at their door,
 ' The Poor, the Friendless,—Worth, without a home,
 ' They little heed, and waste their sympathies
 ' On dim, and distant objects !—Blessings near, 1600
 ' Heaven's varied gifts, and numberless as sands !—
 ' Food, raiment, health, the lucid faculties,
 ' The sweets of friendship ; these are heeded not !
 ' These raise no grateful sense,—no glow of thanks—
 ' To Him, the bounteous Giver ! God requires 1605
 ' For all his great and countless benefits,—
 ' No hard return ;—devotedness to Him,

'The spirit's consecration, with a heart,
 'Thankful, and tuned to cheerfulness ; best proof
 'Of hidden virtues.—Murder never smiles. 1610
 'But cheerfulness the Christian most becomes.
 'Why should the favour'd man, whose home is Heaven,
 'Who walks by faith, who holds communion sweet
 'With God, and spirits pure ;—why should his heart
 'Sorrows o'erwhelm ?—with joy and morn, so near ? 1615
 'A point between ! Let terrors shake their frame
 'Who have no refuge-tower ! Let those alone
 'On melancholy brood, and hang the head,
 'Strangers to happiness, who, 'mid Life's storms,
 'Behold no Heavenly Pilot ; who survey 1620
 'Confusion and thick clouds,—looking dismay'd
 'O'er the dark chaos of conjecture, chain'd
 'To earth, and earthly hopes ; but let the men
 'Who seek another and a better rest,—
 'A heavenly country, smile, for all is theirs, 1625
 'Or life, or death ;—things present, things to come !

'To him who bears the Christian's hallow'd name
 'Anguish, and grief consuming, are proscribed
 'As things unlawful. Is it a vain dream,
 'And not a sacred stern reality, 1630
 'That God directs, and governs ?—whose controul
 'The Seraphim and Worm alike obey !
 'Whence then is man's rebellion ?—his distrust
 'The moment Faith, not Sight, his homage claims ?
 'Is confidence ideal ? Is the name 1635
 'All that High Heaven requires ? Are blossoms fair
 'The boundaries of our wishes,—not matured
 'And ripen'd into fruit ?—

'Grief, keen, is felt
 'By all the Righteous—that no deeper sense 1640
 'Rests on their hearts, for benefits received.
 'And there are pungent pangs which others raise,

' When they are seen—treading the downward road,
 ' Yet, rich in hope!—unmindful that they hang
 ' Over a Gulf, dark, deep, and fathomless!— 1645
 ' Suspended by the brittle Thread of Life !

' But tho' benevolence rules all that is,
 ' For needful purposes, to thee unknown,
 ' There is a certain residue of ill,
 ' Long to prevail on earth, tho' righteous men, 1650
 ' Labour in word and deed to check its growth.
 ' It is an evil world. This will be found
 ' Whatever fairy schemes of happiness
 ' Men fondly shape. But tho' Perfection, Earth
 ' May not attain, shall not her sons aspire 1655
 ' Near to approach as may be? Shall they fail
 ' To cross some limpid stream, for that no foot,
 ' Vent'rous, hath ocean forded?—

' Ever strive
 ' Well to perform thy part, and know assured 1660
 ' Whence comes the aid effectual. Be thy name
 ' The Father of thy People! Honour Worth!
 ' Where Talent reigns, or that ethereal spark—
 ' Genius,—direct and cherish it! Its power
 ' Illumes the present, and a radiance casts 1665
 ' On ages yet to come. Aspire to be
 ' The friend, the patron, the conservator—
 ' Of Mind, which stamps the dignity of Man.
 ' By Power prevent all wrong and violence;
 ' All cruelty to brutes: for God beholds, 1670
 ' With a paternal eye, his lowest works,
 ' And hath appointed for th' unfeeling heart
 ' Deep and peculiar punishments.

' The king,
 ' Faithful to his high station, happiest feels 1675
 ' To see his people happy!—such be thou!
 ' Instruct the ignorant; and, as the spring,

'The source of best instruction, spread the sound
 'Salvation dealt to man! Give them the food
 'God hath appointed! This shall tame their hearts, 1680
 'Howe'er rebellious; this shall cure the ill,
 'When all things fail: so shalt thou rise, ere long,
 'To meet, on high, the New Jerusalem;
 'Stupendous thought! Yes, even thou shalt join,
 '(After the silver cords of life are loosed) 1685
 'Th' innumerable company of angels!
 'The gen'ral church, and the first-born of heaven!
 'The God of all! the spirits of the just—
 'Made perfect! and that sole-procuring cause
 'Of all their joy, the Mediator, Christ! 1690

'If thou would'st other knowledge know, declare!
 'For I am sent to caution and inform.'
 The king thus seemed to say. 'Bright Messenger!
 'Communicant of holy mysteries!
 'Thou hast my praise! Angel, immortal, hail! 1695
 'I would inquire, with due humility,
 'The nature of thy office, and what good
 'Thou hast bestow'd on me.' To whom the angel.

'Favour'd of God! unnumber'd are the pits,
 'Some seen, but most unseen, which throng life's path, 1700
 'And send the unsuspecting traveller
 'To his long home. Many hast thou escaped,
 'Not of thyself, for thou hast often rush'd
 'Mid thickest dangers, but, thy heart was right,
 'Thou trustedst in thy God, and I upheld, 1705
 'By Him commission'd, thine unguarded feet.—
 'Deep and mysterious are the ways of Heaven!
 'Faintly perceived by us, to thee all dark,
 'One thing thou yet may'st know, of old revealed,
 'By Moses and the prophets, tho' unseen 1710
 'By all, whose eyes, whose hearts, mammon, accurst!
 'Hath dimm'd and harden'd.—He who trusts in God,

' By a celestial alchemy, shall find
 ' The dreariest, darkest, avenues of life
 ' Transmuted into pastures green and fair,— 1715
 ' The one peculiar and appointed way,
 ' That leads to God and glory.

' Thro' the world,
 ' Dangers on every side stand thick ; man's eye
 ' Cannot descry them ! under streams they dwell, 1720
 ' Mid beds of roses ; in the verdant mead,
 ' The desert waste, the city populous ;
 ' And in the *small* hut, by the mountain's side—
 ' On hills, and in the vallies. Each alike,
 ' Stands open to the subtle enemy 1725
 ' That lurks unseen. Such is the earthly race
 ' All men must run, exposed at every step
 ' To sorrows infinite, to pain, and death.
 ' But there is one defence, and one alone.
 ' The Maker of the world and all therein 1730
 ' Hath so ordain'd, that he whose heart implores
 ' Celestial guidance, shall from him receive
 ' A guardian, like to me, whose keener eye,
 ' From real, not apparent harm, shall lead
 ' The faithful suppliant, and at last conduct 1735
 ' O'er death's dark gulf, to Heaven.

' But I would now,
 ' Further inform thee. Through th' appointed path ;
 ' All men must run, in this their earthly race,
 ' Evil full often seems the better thing, 1740
 ' And good the evil. By th' immortal laws
 ' This is ordain'd, to teach the ignorant
 ' The penalty of failure, virtue's worth,
 ' And from experience, fruitful source of light,
 ' By slow progression, to instruct the heart 1745
 ' Where wisdom lies.—

' Some pitfalls are to death,
 ' Some quicken foresight, and awake the prayer

' For better guidance. Ever then at hand
 ' We are, to yield our aid invisible : 1750
 ' And often do we lead, dissatisfied,
 ' Men from disastrous bane, or, half permit
 ' Their feet to fall, to loosen that deep root
 ' Of self-dependence, all men love so well.

' The deadliest poisons oft are found to dwell 1755
 ' With flowers most fair, to come within whose breath
 ' Rouses the pestilence, and sinks the heart
 ' To that worst state, insensibility !
 ' Where the soul groans, yet learns not to be wise.
 ' Then is our virtue tried. We know the path, 1760
 ' That death attends it, and full often lead
 ' Weak man from ruin, whilst he thinks it hard
 ' To see the flattering good, yet turn away.
 ' And oft we guide the pilgrim, heaven-ward bound,
 ' Thro' crooked ways and brambles, 'mid steep hills, 1765
 ' And pathless vallies, to escape some harm
 ' Unseen, but in the end, that leads to death.—
 ' From infancy our exercise begins.
 ' We tend the infant from the hour it breathes,
 ' 'Till reason dawns, or, wretched were the state 1770
 ' Of helpless childhood. In its tender years
 ' What evils lurk to overwhelm it in the grave !
 ' But we, with most especial earnestness,
 ' To those prepared the shining path to tread,
 ' Ever surround, ward off each secret foe, 1775
 ' And feed the intellectual spark, ere long
 ' To blaze abroad, and erring man direct
 ' To the one path to Heaven. Now will I speak
 ' Of my appointment, and the services
 ' I have perform'd for thee. 1780

' Thy guardian I,
 ' Constant, have succour'd thee, in hours so dark,
 ' They seem'd desertion ; but th' Almighty Sire

'Then loved thee most, and led thee in the way
 'Best suited to secure thy better part. 1785
 'Thou hast implored direction from on high,
 'From youth, 'till now, and though God often hides
 'The secret purpose of his ways to man,
 'And makes him walk by faith, yet I am now
 'Permitted to assume a character, 1790
 'Clear to thine organs, to declare the ways
 'Thou hast been led in, that thy heart may place
 'Fresh confidence in Heaven.—

'When opening youth
 'Gave to thy spirit reason, I with joy 1795
 'Perceived thy heart implore that better guide,
 'All need, tho' few require, and still remain'd
 'Thy Guardian Angel. Little dost thou know
 'What benefits and untold blessings spring
 'From such dependence. Spirits like myself 1800
 'Space cannot stop. And sometimes when engaged
 'In shouting loud Hosannas, 'mid the choir
 'Of Angel and Archangel, I have seen
 'Perils await thee, and beside thee stood,
 'Directing! whilst the sluggish sun-beam bright, 1805
 'Toil'd after me. Such is an Angel's speed!
 'Our chariot is the chariot of a thought!

'Nor deem it strange that one like me should bound
 'His narrow influence; for, all the Orders
 'Of high Intelligences, progress make 1810
 'Toward Love's pure element, the source of good;
 'Whose crystal waters all the Sons of Light
 'Drink ever, and delightful visions feel,
 'The heart expanding; making each endure
 'For all that lives, divinest sympathy, 1815
 'And more intense benevolence. High Heaven
 'Each hath appointed, by gradations meet,
 'To run this race, and, by steps infinite,

- ‘ In passion, never ! 1855
- ‘ For wise purposes
- ‘ The abbey walls were rased, the Danes allow’d
- ‘ To scatter death, but, ’mid the terrors round
- ‘ Thy queen I safe conducted, and, at length,
- ‘ Gave her a weeping captive to that foe— 1860
- ‘ Belov’d of Heaven, the man, who hence shall shine
- ‘ Great in all virtues,—call’d to the true faith.
- ‘ I Wilton’s Abbot, wandering o’er the moor,
- ‘ Led to thy child :—and thro’ my influence,
- ‘ Urged him to wind his footsteps to the cot 1865
- ‘ Where thou resortedst, in thy depth of woe ;
- ‘ Depression’s lowest point !—Yet learn again.—
- ‘ That she thy queen a captive should become,
- ‘ By Heaven’s all-seeing eye, needful was deem’d
- ‘ To try thy faith, her own, discord to raise 1870
- ‘ Within the Danish camp ; (for ’tis ordain’d
- ‘ Before a people fall, that first shall rise
- ‘ The fiend Dissension) and, at last, convert
- ‘ Guthrum the Dane. Hence when affliction hangs.
- ‘ Heavy upon thee, doubt not the design. 1875
- ‘ Its end is mercy.—
- ‘ Know ! my secret aid
- ‘ In moments perilous and dark, preserved
- ‘ Thy helpless infant, when the Abbot fell,
- ‘ Pierced of the Dane. In his ferocity, 1880
- ‘ He would have slain thy child. His sword he raised !—
- ‘ He had no power to strike !—(not more than they
- ‘ Who led the Saviour to that precipice,
- ‘ Resolved to hurl him downward.—Hand unseen
- ‘ Restrain’d the raging multitude, and mist 1885
- ‘ Cast o’er their visual orb.)—Commission’d thus,
- ‘ I caused the innocent—(unconscious he—
- ‘ Of danger) in the assassin’s face to *smile*,
- ‘ And clap his hands. It touch’d his flinty heart !
- ‘ Loud he exclaim’d, Let others take thy life, 1890

I cannot. Such our subtile influence.

‘In silent adoration, ’mid the hour,
 ‘Or dark, or luminous, do thou behold—
 ‘*His* Hand,—that guides the Lightning, rules the Storm,—
 ‘Awakes the Thunder!—in its majesty 1895
 ‘Careering thro’ the sky,—roar following roar
 ‘Till one imperial crash convulses heaven!
 ‘Now, from his subterranean depths unknown
 ‘He calls the Earthquake, heaving, terrible,—
 ‘Impels the whirlwind, and alike sustains 1900
 ‘Thro’ Earth, and to Creation’s utmost bound
 ‘His universal empire. For thy joy,
 ‘That Being who controls these elements
 ‘Is thy Protector.—Trust Him and obey!

‘Still learn, how I have watch’d and succour’d thee. 1905
 ‘In hour of sadness, I thy footsteps led
 ‘Where that old man the hermit walk’d, and gave
 ‘Soft words, consoling, to his tongue, to cheer
 ‘Thy languid breast, and rouse the dormant spark
 ‘Of faith within thee. I the mother led 1910
 ‘That aged woman on the forest’s verge,
 ‘To tell her tale, and as thou listen’dst sad,
 ‘Ivar pass’d on, unseeing thee. So him,
 ‘Who stops to hear the tale of misery,
 ‘Blessings shall follow! I attended thee, 1915
 ‘Deeming thyself alone, in many an hour,
 ‘Of perils numberless, I clear’d thy path;
 ‘And when thou soughtest Ivar’s camp, I round
 ‘Hover’d incessant; in thy mind called up
 ‘The thought that saved thee, to assume the man, 1920
 ‘Smitten of God; and from thy ready tongue
 ‘Pronounced wild words.

‘But now the time drew near,
 ‘That needed my best power, the day of fight.

'I sought thee in the battle! I beheld	1925
'Each lurking danger that beset thy path,	
'And o'er thy head my unseen helmet cast!	
'And I will still be with thee. I will lead	
'Thy feet in pleasant paths. Whilst thy heart loves	
'Thy Friend and Maker, He will give me charge	1930
'To follow thee. Now thro' thy high career,	
'Shine as the Man of God. Show to the world,	
'In a peculiar sense, how beautiful	
'His feet, the Monarch, who in Zion's ways	
'Walks steadfastly.—Awhile, I bid adieu.	1935
'The memory of these words, thro' life preserve,	
'So, in the hour of death shalt thou behold—	
'Again thy Guardian Angel.'	
With his mind—	
Fill'd with the heavenly vision, Alfred woke.	1940

BOOK XXIV.

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- ‘ Most noble prince ! 20
 ‘ Thy frown I could have borne, but thou, this heart,
 ‘ Hast conquer’d by thy kindness. I am one
 ‘ Who ever thought his oath inviolate,
 ‘ And soon, from purer principles, will keep
 ‘ That oath to God, more firm,—when next I swear, 25
 ‘ Thou art my monarch ! Yester night I sought
 ‘ Our neighbouring castle, where, the anxious Danes
 ‘ Look’d for me, sad, and on each passing breeze
 ‘ Fancied they saw my spirit ; such belief
 ‘ Had they that I was slain : and tho’ I came, 30
 ‘ And in mine own and proper shape appear’d,
 ‘ They questioned their own sight, half prone to say,
 ‘ Impostor ! Guthrum is no more !—I now
 ‘ Declared thy conduct, all thy gracious words :
 ‘ How thou forgav’st me, and for Guthrum’s sake 35
 ‘ Promis’d to pardon them. I told them more,
 ‘ Of the religion I had late profess’d :
 ‘ In my best way, explain’d its influence ;
 ‘ The power it had to tame the mind, and make
 ‘ This jarring world one family of love. 40
 ‘ I pointed out our foster’d hopes, how low
 ‘ Compared with thine. I named the christian’s joy,
 ‘ How pure his character, how great his deeds,
 ‘ And for the certain test appeal’d to thee.
 ‘ They heard me, wondering, and, O king ! rejoice ! 45
 ‘ Join in my rapture, when to thee I say,
 ‘ They vow’d to be thy subjects, here to dwell
 ‘ Beneath so brave a prince. But, more I say ;
 ‘ They seek to make profession of a Faith,
 ‘ So honour’d by thyself ;—the christian name, 50
 ‘ Henceforth to bear ; dependence to renounce
 ‘ On Warrior Gods !—Creatures of flesh and blood !
 ‘ With eyes illumed, confessing, with myself,
 ‘ How baseless were their fears, their hopes how vain !
 ‘ Cherish’d so long ! and now, true penitents, 55

' Firm converts, as I trust, with hearts sincere,
 ' Without this tent, thirty brave chieftains stand,¹⁹⁴
 ' Desirous to partake, with me, O, king!
 ' And this, my daughter, whom thy hand hath saved,
 ' The rite, Baptism.' 60

Alfred, glad, replied :

' Firm is my trust in thee, and on thy faith
 ' I take thy fellows. They with thee shall share
 ' The holy ordinance ; and if their hearts,
 ' Kindness may reach, a happier race, the sun, 65
 ' Shall never visit. Tell them to repair,
 ' Where silver Thone¹⁹⁵ meandering glides along,
 ' And be thou with them. There shall you meet *me*.'

Forth to the river's brink they pass along,
 Whilst all the multitude of Saxons, gaze, 70
 In silent admiration. Now the king,
 Stately and slow, draws near, while follows him,
 The queen, conducting to the ritual stream,
 The Danish maiden. Lowly on the ground
 She look'd ; her steps were timid, and her form 75
 Graceful, and chaste her eye ; whilst on her cheek
 Appear'd the blush of youth and innocence.
 When Alfred, with commanding aspect, slow,
 Descended to the water, when he call'd,
 Each warrior Dane, the maiden, and her sire, 80
 Whom, solemn, he address'd :

' Guthrum ! and ye

' Who thus surround me, you are now about
 ' To make profession of a faith divine.
 ' It is no little thing, thus to profess 85
 ' The christian convert. He who comes to God
 ' Must own him such, and from his inmost soul,
 ' Desire the Spirit's teaching. Pure, is God,
 ' And he demands the heart ! You must renounce
 ' Ere you can be accepted, envy, wrath, 90

'Revenge, and every evil way. Your souls
 'Must dwell in charity, and view mankind,
 'As children of one parent, who demands,
 'Each friendly office, and the fervent prayer
 'That those who knew him not, may yet be taught. 95
 'Soon shall you all receive God's Holy Word,
 'Which tells whate'er is needful to be known,
 'And points the road to future happiness.
 'There will you learn how God all merciful,
 'Pitied degenerate men, and to redeem 100
 'Their race from bondage, sent his Son, inspir'd,
 'With the full burden of divinity,
 'To tell of sacred things, and to direct
 'Thro' faith in him, and in his sacrifice,
 'All men aright; so to escape the woes, 105
 'And penal fires, which disobedient souls
 'Must feel hereafter, if they live and die,
 'Estranged from God and from all holiness.
 'If from thy conscience, Guthrum! ¹⁹⁸ thou canst say,
 'This faith is thine, and you who round me stand, 110
 'And maiden thou! Bend and receive the wave!'

All bent devoutly, pressing their full hearts,
 Declaring trust in Christ. And as they stood,
 There came a sudden pause. No word was heard!
 No low and passing sound—woke the still scene, 115
 'But all was silent, waves, and earth, and air;
 'And each of the unnumber'd multitude,
 'Gazing around, felt such a solemn hush,
 All things pervade, and seem'd so sensible
 Of his dread presence, His, the Lord of all! 120
 That to himself, each seem'd to shrink to nought,
 And feel his meanness in the scale of being,
 As never he had felt.—Even like the man
 Who, in a musing hour, wanders beside
 The white and roaring ocean, when its waves, 125

Conflicting lash the shore ; and all around,
 Far as the black horizon, shews one scene ;
 The onward, rolling billows, clothed in foam—
 Terrific, vast, which to his mind call'd up
 (In a peculiar and absorbing sense) 130
 The power of Deity !—then, when he thinks,
 Viewing the world of waters, on himself,
 And seems to say, to every grain of sand,
 'Thou art my brother !'

Having left the tide, 135
 The king his list'ning converts thus address'd :
 'Behold in me your sov'reign ! view your friend !
 'For I am he. Hence shall you ever find
 'In Alfred a protector ! one whose heart,
 'Plans for your welfare !— 140

To the Danish maid,
 Who pensive stood, Alswitha thus began.
 'Sister beloved ! my heart hath room for thee.
 'Ere this, thy friendship has been proved, and now,
 'Mine shall appear, tho' later, not less true.' 145
 With grateful heart, the damsel press'd her hand.
 'Looking to Heaven, but language she had none.
 Now to the spot, a man drew near and cried,
 'An aged pair, a warrior, and a child,
 'With two stout youths, now wait in yonder tent 150
 'O, king ! and ask for thee !' The monarch's heart
 Leap'd but he spake not,—whilst the queen turn'd pale,
 And would have rush'd, outstripping the fleet doe,
 But, mindful of her dignity, she mov'd,
 Stately along, whilst her heart throb'd with joy, 155
 'Till where no eye beheld her, when she sped,
 Rapid and light as doth the passing shadow
 Of the wild sea bird o'er the curling waves.
 And now she reach'd the tent. She sees her child !—
 Her long-lost child ! She springs ! She clasps him round !
 He knows her face, and with his out-spread hands

His mother press'd. 'My child! my child!' she cried,
The tear gush'd forth, and in her arms she held,
Speechless her child.

The king had Guthrum sent, 165
Him, and his daughter, and the Danish chiefs,
To the near castle, greetings to convey
And lasting peace; and now with hasty step
Approach'd the tent with all a father's warmth,
Leaning on Oddune.— 170

At the door he saw—
Acca, and hastening through the company,
Exclaim'd, 'Where art thou?' In his mother's arms
He sees his child! when with transporting joy,
He held him, and, appealing to high Heaven, 175
Cried, 'This our consummation! This the point
'For which our hearts have sigh'd. Mild innocent!
'With other thoughts do I behold thee now,
'Than when I left thee! Thou art hence released
'From dangers and thick perils, and shalt dwell, 180
'Safe with thy parents, cherish'd by their care.
'Go, lovely boy! go to thy mother's arms,
'And there be happy!'

Turning, near, he saw,
The rustic pair from Ethelney, and cried, 185
'I greet you, friends! Ceolric, welcome here!
'And Acca, for thy faithfulness and love
'To this my child, whose rosy cheeks declare
'Thy tender service—take my thanks! and soon
'Expect some higher recompense. Erelong, 190
'(With this thy faithful husband) thou shalt share
'All good, which from the friendship of a king,
'Reason may ask and gratitude bestow.¹⁹⁶
Lowly they bow. When Alfred thus again:—
'These are your sons! Brave and intrepid youths! 195
'To own such parents might alone secure
'Your monarch's favour, but a higher claim

' You boast, an independance, resting firm
 ' Upon your own high merit. To your swords,
 ' I owe my life ! Ye gallant youths, expect 200
 ' No sordid recompense. My thoughts are deeds !
 ' Awhile retire !' When bending they withdrew.
 Theirs was the deep and fix'd astonishment,
 The glowing admiration, which requires,
 Alone, the depths of silence ! 205

Looking round,

Alfred at hand, saw Sigbert, when he cried
 ' I joy to meet thee ! welcome at this hour
 ' Of general exultation ! Thou ere this
 ' Hast combated with injuries, and oft 210
 ' Lost thy due equipoise : but God hath said,
 ' He sees our frame, He knows that we are dust !
 ' And I forgive thee, thou my favour hast.
 ' Yet think not thou, that with forgetting ill,
 ' I lose the good ; inj'ries I may forget, 215
 ' But favours cannot. Sigbert oft thy zeal
 ' Hath help'd me. Thou hast foremost stood, in hours
 ' Trying to do me service, and thy heart
 ' I know is right ! To thee do I ascribe
 ' Yon infant's life, tidings of her thou seest, 220
 ' Alswitha, Heaven's best gift. To show thee now
 ' My sense of thy past services, erelong,
 ' With other structures, sacred to high Heaven,
 ' I will restore,—Wilton's monastic pile
 ' In all its past magnificence, and thou, 225
 ' Once more shall be its Abbot.' ¹⁹⁷

Sigbert look'd,—

Oppress'd with gratitude. No words were his.
 He press'd his heart. Now, looking at the queen,
 Amazement seizes him !—In her he views— 230
 The woman, mid the crumbling abbey walls
 Whom late he saw, by Guthrum borne away !
 Silent, he trembling stands.—The queen drew near.

She cried, 'Brave Sigbert ! Thou a subject's part
 ' Well hast sustain'd, but that thou mett'st my child, 235
 ' And screen'dst him from all harm, thou hast my thanks
 ' Next after God. Behold in me thy friend !'
 When thus the king :—

' Doubtless now peace, around,
 ' Hath spread her fostering wing, thy mind will back 240
 ' To its past state return, and I shall see,
 ' Sigbert, as heretofore, not when he breath'd
 ' Threatenings and slaughter. To disclose my heart,
 ' And shew thee that thy services I prize,
 ' This my first confidence. On the south verge 245
 ' Of Selwood's forest, an old hermit dwells,
 ' Whom late I talk'd with. Seek his lone abode,
 ' And lead him hither. He is one whom God
 ' His Spirit hath pour'd out upon, and taught
 ' Great truths. I need his converse ! Princes stand 250
 ' Firmest and most secure, when round them throng
 ' Good and enlighten'd men.¹⁹⁸

' Now,' cried the king,
 ' Oddune, one word to thee. Friend ! counsellor !
 ' Let me my mind unburden at this hour, 255
 ' For full it is, o'erflowing. Visions bright
 ' Dance round me, and the scenes as yet unborn,
 ' Look fair. A secret whisper in mine ear
 ' Tells me the time is come, when I may see
 ' My people happy. I, their monarch made, 260
 ' To do them good.—Shall e'er the hour arrive
 ' When this my breast, glowing with great designs,
 ' Prosperity shall mildew ? when mine eyes,
 ' Weary of objects fair, shall turn to view
 ' Evil, and love it ? Shall the moment come, 265
 ' When, heedless of past sorrows, I shall stand
 ' Giddy with praise ? with flattery lifted high,
 ' And to myself ascribe these benefits ?
 ' Forsake me not, Father of Heaven and earth !

'With other than th' unhallow'd boaster's heart, 270
 'Fled are our foes, as were the morning mists
 'When the sun rose. Britain is now releas'd
 'From the fierce Dane, and every scene around
 'Smiles on me. After looking up to God,
 'Whose arm upheld us, can I thee behold, 275
 'Nor think of thy deserts? In every toil,
 'Perplexity and care, my constant stay,
 'Whose words have cheer'd me, whose advice hath served,
 'Whose sword protected, and whose name alone
 'Made the invaders tremble. Honour'd friend! 280
 'Idle it were to say, thy happiness
 'Close is allied to mine! To do thee good,
 'Constant, shall be my care, and to reward
 'Thy nameless services. But thou wilt find
 'Thy monarch's commendation, tho' so high, 285
 'And all his benefits, a slender boon,
 'Compared with that bless'd consciousness within,
 'Of duties great and trying, well discharged.
 'Most precious feeling! such as I would hope,
 'One day to know myself, my dying day.' 290

Oddune replied, 'Illustrious potentate,
 'Deem not my merit thus! My soul was roused
 'By thy example. Thou my spirit taught'st
 'To scorn oppression, and the ravenous bands
 'That scourged our isle. I dream'd as others dream'd, 295
 'Till thou appearedst, and the latent spark
 'Bade blaze within me. Dormant had I lain,
 'And all our race, dishearten'd, but for thee! ¹⁹⁹

When Alfred thus: 'My words must now be few.
 'Before this memorable plain we leave 300
 'To seek our friends and home, our fruitful fields,
 'Once more will I address my valiant hosts!

The queen arose, and with her infant boy,
 Pass'd toward the waiting warriors, whilst the king,
 ' With Oddune, follows her. The herald spake, 305
 ' And instant round their prince his subjects throng,
 When all was silence. Loftier than the rest
 Stood Alfred. On one side the queen appear'd,
 Bearing her child, and on the other, Oddune;
 While the vast host of Saxons all around, 310
 Intent, stood listening; when the king his arm
 Raising, thus spake.

' My subjects, yet once more
 ' I claim your patience ! Ere we leave this field,
 ' Immortal in our annals, I would first 315
 ' Address you from an overflowing heart,
 ' And name what joys, what prospects, now are ours ;
 ' What evils are past by, and what is due
 ' To Heaven above, and you His instruments.
 ' Now is our foe no more ! The fearful clouds 320
 ' That o'er our heads hung low'ring, and with threats
 ' Of devastating fury, through the land
 ' Spread terror, from the cottage to the throne,
 ' Like midnight dreams are vanish'd, and the scene,
 ' Smiling around, resembles yonder sun 325
 ' Now bright and cloudless. With heart melody
 ' Sound the deep tones of gratitude, for now
 ' Danger is o'er ! That blessing, which, to taste,
 ' Our fathers sought, yet to the grave went down,
 ' And knew it not, that blessing—peace, is ours ! 330
 ' At death they trembled, not for their own sakes,
 ' For they were good and faithful, but they saw,
 ' When leaving this low earth, the gathering storm,
 ' And fear'd for us their children. Cease to fear,
 ' Ye holy martyrs ! Honour'd shades ! behold, 335
 ' Our bands are broken. Albion now is free.
 ' Where is the languid heart ? Where stands the man
 Stranger to transport ? Where is he who views

' What Heaven hath wrought, with black indifference?
 ' He lives not to pollute the air! Your hearts 340
 ' Glow on your cheeks, and glisten in your eyes!

' Now to your dwellings haste, with souls elate,
 ' Long left, but not forgotten. Now prepare
 ' To call from crags, and caves, and forests deep,
 ' Your frightened offspring, and your trembling wives, 345
 ' And doubly prize—whom you have bled to save.
 ' Now till the soil, nor fear a stranger's hand—
 ' Wrestling the produce. And, at evening hour,
 ' When after daily toil your cots you seek,
 ' (Where treasures dwell, more precious to your heart 350
 ' Than gems and gold) dread not to open the door
 ' Lest waste and death, the murderous Dane should show
 ' These fears are o'er! These images are pass'd!
 ' Hence gaze upon your smiling innocents,
 ' Nor feel the horror of the thought, that these 355
 ' Rise up to taste your sorrows, and endure
 ' Th' oppressive burdens you have groan'd beneath,
 ' For they shall reap where you have nobly sown.

' A fairer isle than BRITAIN, never sun
 ' View'd in his wide career, centering charms, 360
 ' Scatter'd thro' other regions, here combined,—
 ' Surpassing Fancy in her happiest dream.
 ' Its rivers glittering to the noon-day sun,
 ' Meandering glide in silent majesty,
 ' Bearing their treasures to the rich campaigns: 365
 ' Its woods delight the eye, its towering hills
 ' Rise, wave-like, clothed in verdure: rocks and glens,
 ' With prospects infinite, still new and fair,
 ' Crowd on the vision, and pourtray the haunts
 ' Of partial Nature, who here reigns supreme 370
 ' In her selectest glory, whilst, to stamp
 ' Our confluence of the lovely and the grand

- ' In one inspiring word, which fills the breast
 ' With all sweet joys, and tender sympathies,
 ' This Pride of the creation is our *Home*!— 375
 ' Our fathers', and our own dear *native land*!
 ' Nor shalt thou, England! in thy plenitude
 ' Of good and graceful things, be left unpraised
 ' For that which throws new splendours o'er thy name,—
 ' Thy crowning greatness!—Genius here erects 380
 ' Her deathless monuments! With eye benign,
 ' Here Hospitality throws wide her door
 ' And with the loaded banquet, cheers the heart
 ' Of passing strangers, whilst (till foes assail'd)
 ' The Children of Misfortune sought our realms,— 385
 ' The wrong'd of every land, and here, in peace,
 ' With cordial greetings, and kind offices,
 ' Found refuge. Such illustrious deeds, our sons
 ' Shall nobly emulate, and, with their own,
 ' Advance our honours. Here the Forms Divine 390
 ' Justice and Mercy, Liberty and Truth,
 ' Spread wide their banners! To these happy shores,
 ' (Encompassing an earthly paradise)
 ' The world's remotest tribes direct their gaze,
 ' And fain would claim the privilege we boast, 395
 ' Of calling this their country. Oh, our Isle!
 ' Thou Queen of Earth! henceforth when thou art named,
 ' May every heart, exultant, leap with joy,
 ' That he was born a *Briton*!
 ' Gallant men! 400
 ' Now crown'd at last, let us receive the prize
 ' Won by our valour, and, to nations round,
 ' Aloud proclaim, that Saxons still are brave,
 ' And not more brave than free, who can respect
 ' The rights of others, and defend their own. 405
 ' And if in times, more distant, there should rise
 ' Great foes and many, we may proudly hope,
 ' Our progeny, thinking of us their sires,

'Will rise vindictive, and th' invader's spear
'Trample in dust, as we this day have done" 410

'Before we part, my subjects ! let me say,
'With unfeign'd gratitude, the debt I owe
'For constancy like yours. 'Mid troubles deep,
'And hardships, such as never men endured,
'You uncomplaining, as unconquer'd, stood, 415
'Foremost in every toil : and tho' you saw
'Success far off, yet patient were your looks,
'And firm your hearts, and true, to me your king.
'On this proud day posterity shall dwell
'And in their plenitude of joy, on you 420
'Heap praises, whilst the glorious sun on high
'Makes their hearts glad.—

'Subjects ! that hence your days
'Comfort may bless, one small return receive !
'Each man, of all around, whose sword was drawn 425
'In this his country's cause, shall now possess,
'Together with my smiles, a plot of land,
'A cottage, that shall every good contain,
'And I will be your father.'

Wide arose 430
The voice of exultation, indistinct ;
Sounding as doth the distant sea ; for each
Felt his heart leap, and utter'd the half prayer.
When Alfred thus again :

'Illustrious men ! 435
'One moment more. My words have not been framed
'To self-applause, nor hath my heart been taught
'To see aught good, but, from the hand of God.
'When speaking of your valour and your might,
'I know you but the instruments ! On high 440
'Dwells the Great Ruler of all mortal things !
'With him have we found favour ! He it was
'Who this deliverance wrought ; who, by His hand

‘Unseen, made plain our path, and at this hour,
‘Gives us to triumph! He it was who screen’d 445
‘Our heads ’mid perils numberless! His arm
‘Fought on our side!—Saxons, with me rejoice!
‘But,—to the God of Heaven be all the praise!’

Each answered in his heart; no voice was heard,
‘But to the God of Heaven be all the praise!’ 450

. Amid the pause, to feeling sanctified,
Oddune his helm uplifted, and exclaim’d
‘Long live our king!’—The accents touch’d all hearts,
When instant round ‘Long live our king!’ arose
From the vast multitude, in deafening shout, 455
Extending thro’ the concave, in its strength,
That earth convuls’d, and shook the firmament!—
E’en like the loud North East, when he combines
A thousand scatter’d breezes, and comes on,
Flood-like, with all his retinue of storms. 460

NOTES.

1—page 9. *Regner Lodbrog.*

The Father of Ivar and Hubba was Regner Lodbrog, King of Denmark. He reigned in Denmark the beginning of the ninth century. After a long series of maritime expeditions into the most distant Seas, he was at length taken prisoner by his adversary, Ella, King of Northumberland, and perished by the bite of Serpents with which Ella had filled the dungeon where he was confined. While dying, he composed a Song, wherein he records all the valiant achievements of his life, and threatens the Saxons with the vengeance of his sons, Ivar and Hubba. This Song, which is a good specimen of the poetry of that age, will be found in the Note, 132. p. 187.

2—page 9. ‘*Odin.*’

Odin was a great Warrior of the North, who after his death was deified, and esteemed the chief of the Scandinavian Gods. He lived for many years the most triumphant of conquerors, when finding old age draw near, he assembled his followers, and determined to die the hero he had lived. With a lance he pierced his body in the form of a circle in nine places, and when expiring, informed his attendants, that he was then going to the halls of Valhalla, there to become an immortal God and to prepare joys for the valiant. He taught them, that the Gods would reject all who died not in war, or by their own hands; that the felicities they would receive hereafter would be proportioned to the courage they displayed in battle, and to the number of enemies they had slain, out of whose skulls they were to drink their mead. That such a faith should have enabled the hardy Scandinavian to produce the changes in Europe which it did, and finally to triumph over Rome herself, ought not to excite surprise.

3—page 10. ‘*Valhalla.*’

The Danes believed in two places of rewards. Valhalla and Gimle, and in two places of punishment, Nifheim and Nastrond. In Valhalla the heroes spent the day in martial sports, and the night in feasting on the boar Scrimner. All brave men were to remain here until the end of the world, when the heavens and the earth, and even the Gods themselves were to be consumed by fire; after this general conflagration, a new and more beautiful world was to arise out of the ashes of the former, named Gimle; here all the brave were to dwell for ever, being a palace built of shining gold. Nifheim, or the abode of evil, was governed by Hela whose palace was Anguish, her table Famine, her waiters Expectation and Delay, the threshold of her door Precipice, her bed Leanness, whilst her looks struck terror into all beholders. After the general destruction there was to be another place of punishment far more dreadful than Nifheim called Nastrond, built with the carcases of serpents, where the bad (that is the cowardly) were eternally to remain.

Serimne

4—page 10.

‘Let Saxon foes display the pitying heart.’

Alfred had discovered at all times, great lenity to his Danish prisoners; the Danes on the contrary, uniformly exercised the greatest barbarities to their Saxon captives. It was not unusual for the Danes to make a vow to Odin, before the commencement of an engagement, that if he would grant them success, they would offer to him all their prisoners, on which occasions they were indiscriminately slaughtered; on other occasions however, and in their own country they often displayed a magnanimity that did honour to their national character. The Danes never mentioned the name of Odin, without some excessive encomium of his person, or wonderful relation of his magical performances. They ascribed to him a power of calling up the Ghosts of deceased persons and of shutting them up in the rocks and hills. Upon his death he commanded that all his limbs should be marked with nine scars; and that they should sacrifice to him such prisoners as were taken in war, as a most acceptable offering and atonement to him. After his death he is represented as appearing in battle to his friends, to whom he promised victory; others he invited to *Valhalla*. The Danes sacrificed to him not only vulgar persons, but on great occasions even Princes and Kings. All who were sacrificed believed that they were to be admitted to the Halls of Odin.

5—page 10. ‘*Muspelsheim*.’

Muspelsheim was a flaming world in the South, from which incessantly flowed torrents of sparkling fire.

6—page 10. ‘*Nefthheim*.’

The Scandinavian Hell.

7—page 10. ‘*Thorilda*.’

Thorilda was one of the three Sisters of Ivar and Hubba.

8—page 10. ‘*The Sorceress*.’

For many centuries, in the North, no war was undertaken, without first consulting wizards and witches, on whose decision implicit reliance was placed. The northern people also regarded divination, by the air, by the earth, by the dead, and all dreams. They were also guided on all important occasions, by examining entrails, water-works, lots, and signs, the exhalations of mountains, the flight and singing of birds, and the leaping of fish. The Danes also, had another superstition. When they designed to wage war against an enemy, they set their spears before the temple of their Gods, and a horse supposed to be sacred, was led out. If he first put his right foot foremost, the omen was supposed to be good, but if on the contrary he stepped with his left foot, the omen was esteemed unlucky, and the design abandoned.

9.—page 10. ‘*Consult the Oracle*.’

The northern nations had numerous Oracles. It was generally believed that the Gods and Goddesses, or the three Destinies, presided in these places. The Oracle of Upsal was the most famous in the North, independently of which there were others much celebrated in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, as well as among the Parcæ and other tribes.

10.—page 10. *Meet not Curetur.*

Othin, a famous soothsayer, being consulted by Hadrin, King of Denmark whether he should war with Curetur, a neighbouring tyrant, answered, if he did he would be taken prisoner. He persisted, and suffered defeat.

11.—page 11. *'From her who bore me.'*

Ivar's mother was named *Thora*, the daughter of a Swedish Prince. In former times when so many fierce warriors were roaming through the countries of the North, young women of rank and beauty were considered by their friends as unsafe, unless placed in a strong castle and defended by some man of tried courage. Thora's father had entrusted her to the guardianship of one of his officers, who falling in love with his ward refused to resign her: on which the father made it known that whoever subdued him should receive his daughter as a reward. Young Regner Lodbrog, the father of Ivar and Hubba; who was not less distinguished for his gallantry, than his warlike achievements, immediately accepted the offer, and proved as successful in this, as he had been in all his other enterprises. Thora, dying some years after, Regner married a shepherdess named Aslauga, whom he saw by accident on the coast of Norway.

12.—page 11. *'I by the spell am bound.'*

The abject superstitions of the Scandinavians may be collected from the following extract from *Olaus Magnus*. "There are in the northern countries, Temples and houses consecrated to the Fatal Sisters, which were built by Witchcraft, without man's aid, to which persons repaired to consult the Fates concerning their children's future destinies, and when they looked in, they sometimes saw three or otherwise four of these Nymphs sitting. Antiquity also testifies that there have been various monstrous things which have passed almost through the whole world, as Ghosts, Rural and Household Gods, Satyrs, Hags, Hob-goblins, Witches and Fairies. It is a tradition that the noble Champion of the Goths did often fight singly with monsters and huge beasts, either to free some weak men, or to try their valour; and who took care not to set upon any wild beast, with more company than the custom of valiant men would permit. Regnerus of Sweden was a Champion who fought all night against a whole troop of nocturnal monsters, and when it grew light, he perceived that he had met oftentimes in the fields, divers forms of Ghosts and unusual shapes. Moreover, one Broderus and Buchi, with King Gorman, being more bold than ordinary men are, undertook a voyage full of danger, and scarce to be undergone by mortal man, for sailing round the earth, leaving the sun behind them, and passing by the stars that were under the deep, and lastly coming beyond the land of Biarmia, into places where was no light, but in continual darkness, they fought with incredible troops of monsters; for they invaded Fairies that attempted to come upon them and take away their weapons, and they conquered whole armies of strange apparitions with their bows, and their slings."

13.—page 13. *'Night Hag.'*

Magicians and Soothsayers, in the North, were believed to have the power of walking over the sea with the same ease that they could over

dry land. Holler the Magician, was believed to have voyaged over many parts of the ocean on a bone. Oddo, also a Dane, would wander alone over the sea, and he asserted he could raise and allay storms, and destroy at pleasure the whole of an enemy's fleet. Both of these were killed by other magicians more powerful than themselves. Othin is said, in one of his maritime excursions, to have discovered King Hadrin, riding on a horse many leagues at sea, where he had been conveyed by magical incantations. He destroyed the spell and conducted him back to the shore, and on his way, bestowed on him the power of seeing the impression of the horse's feet in the water, with which the king professed himself "much delighted." The power of these Magicians, was believed to be almost unbounded. They could cast mists before the people's eyes so as to represent themselves or others in what light they thought proper. The power of the witches was also very great, as will be perceived, by what is asserted by Hugbert, the daughter of Vagnost the giant, who it was believed could change her posture at pleasure: sometimes she was very large, at other times diminutive, sometimes withered faced, sometimes beautiful, sometimes as tall as a tree, then again as short as a pigmy; she was even believed to have it in her power to harden fountains, melt mountains, and lift ships from the ocean. There were innumerable other females who were famous for the like endowments. No power was so generally professed by the magicians of the north as that of allaying and exciting storms. Ericus, the nephew of Regner Lodbrog, was considered as inferior to none in his time for an acquaintance with the magical art, and so familiar was he with the evil spirits, "whom he exceedingly adored," that which way soever he turned his cap, the wind was said immediately to blow from the same quarter.

14—page 14. '*Fatal Sisters.*'

Name often given to the Witch and Sorceress. The reputed '*Fatal Sisters*,' commonly resided in the wildest places; and to whom was ascribed almost illimitable power. *Olaus Magnus* says, Hother, the Danish king, once in hunting, was drawn far from his attendants, where, in the midst of a deep wood, he found a splendid mansion, inhabited by the Fatal Sisters. They declared to him that the fortune of all battles depended upon themselves: that they were often present in conflicts when no man saw them, and gave success or defeat as they pleased. While the king listened, the Fatal Sisters fled away, when he found that he had been subjected to their illusions, for he perceived himself to be in the open air, in the midst of a desert, and no house or tree near.

15—page 14. '*How fares my injured father?*'

Though Regner had been a brave warrior, yet not having died in battle, nor by his own hands, agreeably to the superstition of his country, Ivar felt solicitude concerning his welfare. Odin sent Hela down to Niflheim, and gave her power over nine worlds that she might assign places to the refuse of mankind who died not in battle, but of *old age*. "The Danish histories speak of one Herald Hildetand, who was exceedingly distressed at the idea of descending to Niflheim; and being blind, lame, and bed-ridden, and fearing he might die from sickness or age, he commanded himself to be carried into battle in his chariot, where he hoped to be slain, and that lifting his finger might be construed into fighting, and thereby entitle him to a seat in Odin's Halls."

16—page 16. '*Serpent of Midgard.*'

The Serpent of Midgard, was one of the three Monsters which sprung from Odin, and was supposed principally to dwell in the midst of the sea. The traditions of this Serpent, may have been the foundation of the marvellous account which Pontoppidan gives of the Kraken. The conflict of Thor with the Serpent of Midgard is thus described in the *Edda of Snorro*:

'Thor resolved to attack the serpent if an opportunity offered: with this view he set out from Asgard under the form of a young boy, in order to go to the giant Hymer. When he got there, he besought the giant to permit him to go on board his bark with him when he went a fishing. The giant answered, that a little puny stripling like him, could be of no use to him, but would be ready to die of cold when they would reach the high seas, whither he usually went. Thor answered him, that he feared nothing; and asked him what bait he intended to fish with. Hymer bade him look out for something. Thor went up to a herd of cattle which belonged to the giant, and seizing one of the oxen, tore off his head; then returning to the bark, where Hymer was, they sat down together. Thor placed himself in the middle of the bark, and plyed both his oars at once; Hymer, who also rowed at the prow, saw with surprise how swiftly Thor drove the boat forward, and told him, that by the land marks on the coast he discovered that they were come to the most proper place to angle for flat fish. Thor assured him that they had better go a good way further: accordingly continued to row on, till at length Hymer told him if they did not stop, they would be in danger from the great serpent of Midgard. Thor persisted in rowing further in spite of the admonitions of the giant. Then taking out a fishing line exceedingly strong, he fixed it to the ox's head, unwound it, and cast it into the sea. The bait reached the bottom; the serpent greedily devoured the head, and the hook stuck fast in his palate. Immediately the pain made him move with such violence, that Thor was obliged to hold fast by the pegs which bear against the oars; but the strong effort he was obliged to make with his whole body, caused his feet to force their way through the boat, and they went down to the bottom of the sea; whilst with his hands, he violently drew up the serpent to the side of the vessel. It is impossible to express the dreadful looks which the God darted at the serpent, whilst the monster raising his head, spouted out venom upon him. In the mean time, the giant Hymer, seeing with affright, the water enter his bark on all sides, cut with his knife the string of his fishing-line, just as Thor was going to strike the serpent with his mallet. Upon this the monster fell down again into the sea: nevertheless, Thor darted his mallet after him, and bruised his head in the midst of the waves. Then Thor struck the giant a blow with his fist, nigh the ear, and throwing his head into the sea, waded afterwards on foot to land.

17—page 18. '*This stream is Gioll.*'

Gioll was one of the rivers of hell. Balder (the Son of Freya) having been killed, through the subtlety of Lok, Hermode, the son of Odin was prevailed upon to descend to Hell in search of him, and to offer Hela, or Death, a ransom to restore him to life. With this design he mounted Odin's horse and departed on his expedition. For nine days and as many nights he travelled through deep valleys so dark that he did not perceive

where he was going till he arrived on the banks of Gjoll, which he passed over by means of a bridge of gold. Modguder the keeper of the gate told him that the preceding day, Balder, with five squadrons of dead persons passed over this bridge, to the abodes of the dead, lying below and towards the north. It is an evidence of the importance which was attached to a violent death, when Balder, the son of Freya could not be admitted into Valhalla, or Heaven, from the disqualification of having died out of Battle.

18—page 18. '*Divination.*'

Witches resided alone and were visited; yet on particular occasions they would sometimes condescend to attend others. We have the following account from *Bertholin*, of a Danish witch, who, at the request of Earl Thorchill, came to him to give information respecting the continuance of a sickness and famine, that reigned in the land. After he had made all preparations which were usual for the reception of such an honourable guest, the witch arrived. A seat was prepared for the prophetess, raised some steps above the other seats, and covered with a cushion stiffened with hen's feathers. When she arrived on an evening, conducted by the messengers, she was dressed in a gown of green cloth, buttoned from top to bottom, she had a string of glass beads about her neck, and her head was covered with the skin of a black lamb, lined with the skin of a white cat: her shoes were made of calves skin, with the hair on it, tied with thongs, and fastened with brass buttons: on her hands she had a pair of gloves, of white cat's skin, with the fur inward; about her waist she wore a hunlandic girdle, at which hung a bag, containing her magical instruments; and she supported her feeble limbs by leaning on a staff, adorned with many knobs of brass. As soon as she entered the hall, the whole company arose, as became them, and saluted her in the most respectful manner, which she returned as she thought proper. Earl Thorchill then advanced, and taking her by the hand, conducted her to the seat prepared for her. After some time spent in conversation, a table was set before her, covered with many dishes, but she eat only of a pottage of goat's milk, and of a dish which consisted of the hearts of various animals. When the table was removed, Earl Thorchill humbly approached the prophetess, and asked her what she thought of his house, and of his family, and when she would be pleased to tell them what they desired to know. To this she replied, that she would tell them nothing that evening, but would satisfy them fully next day. Accordingly on the day after when she had put all her implements of divination in proper order: she demanded a maiden, named Godreda, to sing the magical song called Vardlokur, which she did with so clear and sweet a voice, that the whole company were ravished at her music, and none so much as the prophetess herself, who cried out, "Now I know many things concerning the famine and sickness, which I did not know before. This famine will be of short continuance, and plenty will return with the next season, and the sickness also will shortly fly away." Heida, another Danish witch, was constantly attended by thirty men servants, and waited upon by fifteen young maidens, and on all occasions was paid the respect of a queen.

19—page 18. '*A Raven, with no Raven's eye.*'

It is asserted that Odin possessed two Ravens to whom he taught the use of language, who flying into remote places brought back true intelli-

gence of whatever was transacting in the world. The Edda thus describes it. "Two ravens sitting on his shoulder whisper in his ear all new occurrences that they either hear or see. The one is called Hugin, the other Munni. He sends these forth every day betimes, that they should fly the world over, and at dinner time return. By these he receives information and therefrom is called Rafngaurd, or the God of Ravens."

20—page 19. '*Chanted the Runic Song.*'

It was Odin who introduced the runic characters, or the art of writing, into the North; and in order to obtain greater respect he ascribed to them miraculous powers, professing by their aid to have the ascendancy over all nature. In his chapter on the runic rhymes, he says, "I know a song by which I enchant the arms of my enemies, and render their weapons of none effect. I know a song of such virtue, that were I caught in a storm, I could hush the winds, and render the air perfectly calm. When I see (he says) magicians travelling through the air, I disconcert them by a single look, and force them to abandon their enterprise. If I see a man dead and hanging aloft on a tree, I engrave runic characters so wonderful, that the man immediately descends and converses with me." When Odin visited hell he compelled the prophetess to speak, for it is said, "he sings to her verses adapted to call up the dead. He looks towards the North; he engraves runic characters on her tomb; he utters mysterious words; he demands an answer; until the prophetess is constrained to arise." Odin was distinguished by the name of the Father of Magic. Different runic characters were calculated for different purposes. There were some which could ensure victory, others that averted poison, some that cured bodily diseases, some that dispelled evil thoughts, others that dissipated melancholy, or softened the heart of a cruel mistress. These last were to be used with great caution, for if an ignorant person made but the slightest error, some sore distemper to his mistress was the inevitable consequence, which could only be cured by writing other runes with more caution. Yet, these various kinds differed only in the ceremonies used in writing them, in the materials on which they were written, in the place where they were exposed, and in the manner in which the lines were drawn. The runic characters which are still preserved, consist chiefly of inscriptions scattered on the rocks of Scandinavia, recording the warlike achievements of kings and heroes. Their letters sent to different persons, were cut with a knife on the bark of a tree, or on a piece of polished wood. The cutting of these runic characters was not difficult, as none of them were curved, but on the contrary, consisted of a succession of straight lines, differently disposed.

Bartholin has preserved an old Danish ode, in which Odin, like Balder, is described as descending to consult Hela. On this fragment, Gray has founded his poem of "The Descent of Odin."

"Odin the sovereign of men arises: He saddles his Horse, Sleipnor; he mounts and is conveyed to the subterranean abode of Hela, or Death."

"The Dog who guards the gates of Death meets him: his breast and his jaws are stained with blood: he opens his voracious mouth to bite, and long barks at the Father of Magic.

"Odin pursues his way: his Horse causes the infernal caverns to resound and tremble: at length he reach es the deep abode of Death, and

stops near to the eastern gate, where stands the Tomb of the Prophetess.

"He sings to her verses adapted to call up the dead. He looks towards the north. He engraves Runic Characters on her tomb: he utters mysterious words; he demands an answer; until the Prophetess is constrained to arise and thus utters the words of the dead.

"Who is this unknown that dares disturb my repose, and drag me from my grave, wherein I have lain so long dead, all covered with *snow* and moisten'd with rain."

21—page 19. '*Half red, half blue.*'

The body of Hela is represented as one half blue, the other half of the colour of human flesh.

22—page 20.

—'And from the skulls

Of vanquish'd enemies, he quaffs his mead.'

The pleasures which the Danes expected after death, discover those of which they most approved during life. The heroes it is said, who are received into the palace of Odin, have every day the pleasure of amusing themselves, of passing in review, of ranging themselves in order of battle, and of cutting one another in pieces: but as soon as the time of repast approaches, they return on horseback all safe and sound to the halls of Ódin, and begin eating and drinking. Their beverage was beer and mead; one single goat, whose milk *was excellent mead*, furnished enough of that liquor to intoxicate all the heroes; and their cups are the skulls of the enemies whom they have slain.

23—page 20. '*Girdle, Cap, or Minister to guard me?*'

Witches, or as they were often called, Fatal Sisters, or Nymphs, were supposed to possess the power of granting to whom they thought proper, Caps, that which ever way they were turned, should direct the weather. Girdles of defence, Swords of might, and Armours of proof. It was one of the latter which Hotham King of Sweden received, when he made a successful war upon Balder, who was a descendant of the God Balder. King Gover had the power granted him, of seeing from Norway whatever was attempted against him in Sweden, though at the distance of a hundred miles. Witches, also, commonly promised the warriors who applied to them for aid, an invisible attendant who should succour them in all seasons of danger; this they might do with much safety, for if slain, they could not upbraid, and if victorious, they only returned to heap new presents and praises.

24—page 20. '*Hresvelger.*'

The Danes supposed the wind to arise from the flapping of the wings of a huge Eagle, named Hresvelger: whilst they ascribed Thunder to the conflict of their own Gods with their enemies. They shot arrows into the air, during the continuance of the storm, as an indication of their readiness to assist their Gods. The Greenlanders to this day, according to *Crantz*, attribute thunder to two women in the clouds who are stretching and flapping dried seal-skins.

25—page 21. *'Turn to the North.'*

At the time the runic characters were writing, as well as during many other ceremonies, it was deemed necessary to look toward the north.

26—page 22. *'This sword was his.'*

The Danes not only revered the swords of their ancestors, but paid divine honours to them, as well as to their battle-axes and their pikes. It was by planting a spear, that they determined the precise spot where prayers and sacrifices should be offered; and after Temples were erected, they still retained so much respect for the sword, that they never made a statue of Odin without placing one in his hand. On the eve of an engagement, they always swore by 'the shoulder of a horse, or the edge of a sword.' Necromancers professed the power of charming swords, which prevented an enemy from doing any execution with them. The antidote against charms was keeping the sword wrapt in clothes, which every warrior was careful to do except at the moment of engagement. It was by preserving his sword in this manner, that Hadlan, a Champion of Norway, resisted the power of Magic, and was at length enabled to kill Heldiger the giant.

27—page 22. *'Thy soul to Hela.'*

Three monsters are understood to have owed their birth to Odin—The wolf Fenris, the serpent of Midgard, and Hela or Death. These are enemies to the Gods, who, after various struggles, have bound them till the last day, when the wolf Fenris, will break loose and devour the Sun. The serpent has been cast into the Sea, where he will remain till he is conquered by the God Thor. Hela or Death has been banished to the lower regions, where she has the government of nine Worlds into which she distributes those who are sent to her. When Hell is spoken of, the lower Worlds are referred to under the government of Hela.

29—page 27. *'Surtur's reign.'*

The Danes entertained the most dreadful anticipations of the reign of Surtur, who was the Adversary of the Gods, and whose dominion was supposed to precede the destruction of all things. *Bartholin* gives the following Danish ode, wherein are exhibited some of the occurrences attendant on the reign of Surtur.

"The Giant Rymer arrives from the east, carried in a chariot: the ocean swells: the Great Serpent rolls himself furiously in the waters, and lifteth up the sea. The eagle screams, and tears the dead bodies with his horrid beak. The vessel of the Gods is set afloat.

"The vessel comes from the east: the host of Evil Genii arrives by sea: Lok is their pilot and director. Their furious squadron advances, escorted by the Wolf Fenris: Lok appears with them.

"The black prince of the Genii of Fire issues forth from the south, surrounded with flames: the swords of the Gods beam forth rays like the Sun. The rocks are shaken, and fall to pieces. The female Giants wander about 'weeping.' Men tread in crowds the paths of death. The heaven is split asunder.

"New grief for the Goddess who defends Odin. For Odin advances to

encounter Fenris; the snow-white alayer of Bela against the 'black' prince of the Genii of Fire. Soon is the spouse of Frigga beaten down.

"Then runs Vidar the illustrious son of Odin, to avenge the death of his father. He attacks the murderous monster, that monster born of a Giant; and with his sword he pierces him to the heart.

"The Sun is darkened: the sea overwhelms the earth: the shining stars vanish out of heaven: the fire furiously rages: the ages draw to an end: the flame ascending, sweeps the vault of heaven."

30—page 28. '*Down to earth's centre.*'

The persons who were consulted concerning future events, were chiefly women, who often resided in caves and lonely places surrounded by every thing which was most calculated to impress the minds of the beholders. On extraordinary occasions visits were even made to Hell. Odin on hearing the portentous dream of Balder repaired thither to consult the Witch Volva for his safety, and after Balder's death Hermode the son of Odin was sent to Hell in order to persuade Hela to release him. For the space of nine days and as many nights he travelled through deep valleys, so dark that he saw not where he was going, till he arrived at the river Gioll, which having passed, he entered the abodes of Death, and beheld his brother. It was believed also that Hadrin, king of Denmark, had been conveyed by the influence of Magic, far under the earth, where were displayed to him the monsters of the infernal regions.

31—page 28. '*Feasting on Scrimner.*'

Scrimner was a Wild Boar, on which the Scandinavian Gods feasted; concerning which Boar, there was this singular property, that though consumed, he was constantly reproduced for the banquet on the following day. The *Edda of Seamond*, thus describes the marvel.

'But says *Gangler*, if every man who has been slain in battle since the beginning of the world, repairs to the palace of *Odin*, what food does that God assign to so vast a multitude? *Har* answered him, 'you have reason to say it is a vast multitude, yet will it still increase, nay the Gods themselves desire that it were still more considerable, when the wolf *Fenris* arrives at the last day. The number however can never be so great, but the flesh of the Wild Boar, *Scrimner* will suffice to sustain them; which though dressed every morning, becomes entire again every night. I believe there are but few who are able to explain this matter to you, as it is described in those verses; the sense of which is to this effect.—'The cook, *Andrimner* dresses the Wild Boar incessantly in his pot: the heroes are fed with the lard or fat of this animal, which exceeds every thing in the world.' But says *Gangler*, does *Odin* eat at the same table as the heroes. *Har* answered, The meat that is set before him, *Odin* distributes to two Wolves, known by the name of *Geri* and *Freki*; for as to himself, he stands in no need of food: wine is to him instead of every other aliment, according to what is said in these verses. 'The illustrious Father of 'Armies, with his own hands fattens his two wolves; the victorious *Odin* takes no other nourishment to himself, than what arises from the unintermitted quaffing of wine.'

32—page 29. '*The illusion from Sorceress.*'

The following is an account of some of the illusions which it was believ-

ed the God Thor experienced on his journey to the city of Utgard, to try his strength with the giants to whom it belonged.

On a certain day (the *Edda* says) Thor set out with Lok in his own chariot, drawn by two he-goats: overtaking a giant of the name of Skrymner, they joined company, and night coming on, they lay down to rest. Thor having taken offence at the giant in the former part of the day, approached, when he thought him asleep, and hurled his mace at his head. Skrymner, awaking, inquired if a leaf had not fallen upon him, and slept again: Thor approaching him a second time, drove his mace through the hinder part of his head: the giant awaking asked if a grain of dust had not fallen upon him, and went to sleep a third time. Thor enraged, then hurled his mace with greater violence, and almost buried it in his cheek. Skrymner awaked and asked if there were any birds there, for he thought a feather had fallen upon him: the Giant now arising said to Thor and his companions, I heard you whisper that I was a very tall man, but you are going where they are much taller, and who will resent any offence which may be offered by such little men as yourselves, which having said, he entered a forest, whilst Thor and Lok proceeded towards Utgard, the city of the Giants. They now entered the gates, and addressed themselves to the King, who discovering who they were, pretended to laugh heartily at their diminutive appearance, and asked them what art they excelled in, saying, that none were permitted to dwell there who were not distinguished for some one excellence above all others: upon which Lok replied, that he could eat more than any man. Let us see that, said the King, and ordered one of his courtiers, whose name was Loge, to come forward and contend with him. Upon which, a large trough full of victuals was produced, and each beginning at one end, they met in the middle; but the victory was adjudged to Loge, because he had eaten the bones as well as the flesh, whereas, Lok had only eaten the flesh. The King then asked what the young man could do who accompanied Thor. Thealfe (for that was his name) answered that he could skate better than any man: Let us determine that, said the King, and conducting him to a snowy plain, gave him Hugo as a competitor: but Hugo so outstripped Thealfe, that he arrived at his journey's end almost the moment he set off. The king then inquired of Thor in what he chose to give proof of his dexterity. Thor replied, that he would contest the prize of drinking with any person at his court: the King consented, and a horn was brought, filled to the brim, which the king said was often by those around him emptied at one draught, most commonly at two, but that none required more than three. Thor was astonished at its magnitude, yet being thirsty, he was determined to do his best, but upon looking into the horn, he could hardly perceive any diminution, when putting it to his mouth a second time, he was resolved to empty it, but on examination scarce any was missed; with this he made a third attempt, determining to retrieve his credit, but still found the horn almost full, upon which Thor relinquished the contest. I see, said the king, you are not quite so stout a man as I thought you. We have, said the King, a trifling exercise in this City, which consists in lifting my cat from the ground; upon which, a large iron coloured cat leaped into the middle of the hall, and Thor putting his hand under the Cat's belly, attempted to raise him with all his might, but could only lift one of his feet from the ground. This

said the king is just what I expected, Thor is little compared with the men of Utgard. Little as I am, said Thor, let me see who will wrestle with me. The king, looking round, said, there is no one here who would not think it beneath him to enter the lists with you; call hither my old nurse Hela. Immediately a toothless old woman appeared, and after many desperate struggles, Thor was brought on one knee; upon which the king ordered them to desist, and turning to Thor, said, there is now no one in my court whom I could ask with honour to fight with you.

The king then conducted Thor and his companions out of the city, upon which Thor remarked that he went away very much ashamed and disappointed. It behoves me then, said the king, to discover to you the truth, since you are out of my city, and I will take care you shall never return to it again while I live and reign: and I assure you had I known half your strength, you should not have entered it now; but I enchanted you by my illusions. First of all, in the forest where I arrived before you, you aimed three blows at me with your mace; the first stroke though slight would have brought me to the ground had I received it, but when you arrive at the place again, you will behold a rock, in which are three narrow channels, one in particular remarkably deep; these are the breaches made by your mace, for I at that time lay concealed behind the rock which you did not perceive. I have used the same illusions, in the contests you have had with the people of my court: Your companion, Lok, like hunger itself, devoured all that was set before him; but his opponent, Loge, was nothing else but a wandering fire, which instantly consumed not only the meat, but the bones and the very trough itself. Hugo with whom Thealfe disputed the prize for swiftness, was no other than Thought or Spirit. When you attempted to empty the horn, you performed upon my word a deed so marvellous, that I should never have believed it if I had not seen it myself: for one end of the horn reached to the sea, a circumstance you did not know: but the first time you go to the sea, you will perceive how much it is shrunk. You performed no less a miracle in lifting the cat, and to tell you the truth, when we saw you lift one of her paws from the earth, we were all extremely surprised and terrified; for what you took to be a cat, was no other than the great serpent of Midgard, which encompasses the earth; and he was then scarce long enough to touch the earth with his head and his tail, so high had you raised him toward heaven. As to your wrestling with an old woman it was very astonishing that she should have been able to bring you down on one knee only, for it was Death with whom you wrestled, who first or last will bring every one low. But now as we are going to part, let me tell you, it will be equally for your advantage as well as mine, that you never come near me again; for should you do so, I shall again defend myself by other illusions and enchantments, so that you will never be able to prevail against me. As he uttered these words, Thor in a rage, laid hold of his mace, and would have launched it at the king, but he suddenly disappeared, and when the God would have returned to the city to destroy it, he saw nothing all around him but vast plains, covered with verdure. Continuing therefore his course, Thor with his companions, arrived at his Palace among the Gods.

33.—page 29. *'And whilst they thought upon it, lo! 'twas done.'*

The Danes invaded Britain, bearing a standard, called the Reafan or

Raven, which was believed to be a magical standard, and to have been made *instantaneously* by the three Sisters of Ivar and Hubba, prior to their brother's departure from Denmark. The Raven was the usual figure displayed on the Danish standards, though not like the present, the production of Magic. It was believed that before a battle, this Raven flapped his wing in token of victory, or otherwise hung down his head as a presage of defeat.

34.—page 29. '*Starchaterus.*'

Starchaterus, (according to *Olaus Maynus*.) was the most famous of the Northern Giants; his history exhibits the manners of the age in which he lived, as well as those actions, which so exalted the character of other Giants—such as Harthin, Ritho, Arngrin, Arverod, Hloridam, Shatur, Heall, and Olo. Starchaterus lived to a great age, not more distinguished for his imagined virtues than he was for his success as a general, and his valour in single combat. It is said, that for centuries after his death, monuments were to be found in the North, commemorating his exploits. According to the custom of the age in which he lived, he commenced Pirate, and having subdued many provinces, at length arrived in Russia, killed Flocus its king, and spoiled him of his treasures, when he assisted by turns, the Biarmians, the Swedes, and the Danes. After this he visited Ireland, and killed two of its most famous Champions, when hearing of Visinnus a noted warrior in the eastern parts of Russia, he went thither, and slew him. This Visinnus by his cruelty and vices had rendered himself abhorred by all; and the reputation of the virtuous Starchaterus, was yet more extended through the North, in consequence of having subdued him. He then visited Poland, and slew in single combat, the Giants Hama, and Vasche. Being requested by Helgon king of Norway, to contend with nine Champions who, at an appointed time, had threatened to deprive him of Helga his wife, Starchaterus arrived before them, and throwing off his clothes regardless of the wind and the snow, set forward to meet them, and though not unwounded, killed in succession, each of his adversaries. Starchaterus distinguished himself greatly in that famous battle between Rengo, king of Sweden, and Harold, king of Denmark, in which the Swedes were victorious, leaving on the field of battle, twelve thousand gallant men, while of the Danes were killed thirty thousand. Finding at length old age approach, and fearing lest he should be deprived of his former honors *by dying a natural death*, he hung 120 pounds weight of gold about his neck (what he had obtained for conquering the tyrant Olo) which he promised to bestow on whoever would kill him: at length meeting with Hather, a young Nobleman, whose father he had slain, Starchaterus held his head toward the ground and prevailed on him with a sharp sword to cut it off,

35.—page 30. '*We will make that Isle a desert.*'

The devastations of the Danes, are thus described by *Speed*. "The summer's opportunity approaching, the wonted desire of the Danes, for spoil, was with it increased, and Ivar and Hubba began with fire and sword to lay all waste before them, sparing neither person, sex, or age. The places respected for public good, and sacred temples, consecrated only to God, which all other tyrants have forborne, these savage men, as the earth's destroyers cast down and trampled under their profane feet."

36.—page 30. *'Across the seas, to Britain steer their course.'*

When the tidings of the death of Regner Lodbrog, by Ella, reached Denmark, Ivar and Hubba, his sons, heard of his fate with feelings of the most desperate revenge. Their depredations, their hostilities, were all laid aside; all former habits, all present objects were forgotten. Retaliation the most unbounded was determined upon, and as their father's activity had made every shore resound with his deeds, so a mighty torrent of vindictive fury was now collected. Federated bands of Warriors demanding the atoning battle, and inflamed with fierce and determined hatred against the King who had destroyed their favourite hero, assembled from every region. Jutes, Swedes, Norwegians, Danes, Frisians, and other nations; all the fury, and all the valour of the north were assembled for this expedition, and when the army of revenge was sufficiently amassed, it quitted Denmark, and arrived on the shores of Britain.

37.—page 32. *'Alswitha.'*

The Wife of Alfred was Alswitha, the daughter of Ethelred Earl of Mercia, (surnamed for his merits the Great) who lived near Gainsborough in Lincolnshire: her Mother was named Eadburg, a lady born of the noble blood of Mercia.

38.—page 33. *'Fall merciless in one promiscuous heap.'*

The Danes who had formerly appeared in England, were few in comparison of those that now contended with Alfred.—We are told by Sir John Spelman, that 'they filled every corner of the land. That after divers dispersings, they concentrated themselves into one large body and being besides so much increased with new incomers, they were now a mighty army, conducted by Ivar and Hubba, like locusts covering the face of the earth. They now despised any longer to be resisted by so poor a number as the West-Saxons were grown unto, and therefore contrary to faith and oath, and the security of their hostages, they enter the king's proper states, and, like a raging flood, bear all before them, taking (Chippenham) in Wiltshire, at that time a principal town of the kings of the West-Saxons.'

39.—page 34. *'Come these fierce Danes.'*

Except about forty years before, and in a small number, the Danes first appeared on the coast of England in the reign of Egbert, in detached parties, and with no other than piratical views. On their first arrival, Egbert was on a successful expedition to Wales, when hearing of his new enemies, he hastened to meet them. The following year the Danes arrived in greater force, and committed much devastation before they were repelled. Two years after, they came with a still superior army, and having prevailed on the Britons of Cornwall to revolt and join them, they proceeded to encounter the West-Saxon king. Egbert not dismayed at this junction, engaged and defeated the combined army at Hengsdown-hill, with prodigious slaughter. This was the last glorious action of the life of that great prince, and first of English monarchs, who died A. D. 836. In the reign of Ethelwolf, the visits of the Danes became annual, or even more frequent, and the histories of those times consist of little

more than details of the ravages of the Danes and of their contest with the inhabitants. The most considerable battle was fought at Okely in Surrey, 851, between Ethelwolf assisted by his son Ethelbald, and a great army of Danes, who had landed from a fleet of 350 sail, at the mouth of the river Thames, and had taken and plundered the cities of Canterbury and London in their march. In this action which is said to have been the bloodiest that was ever fought in England, the English obtained a great victory; but notwithstanding this and two other victories, which they gained in the same year, one by land at Wanbury in Dorsetshire, and another by sea, near Sandwich; the Danes took possession of the Isle of Thanet, where they continued several years, being their first attempt to gain a settlement in England. During the reigns of Ethelbald, Ethelbert, and Ethelred, the three eldest sons of Ethelwolf, the Danes, no longer contented with making desultory descents upon the coast, came over in greater multitudes, under more honorable leaders and penetrated farther into the country. The Danes had now taken possession of and fortified Reading, making it their head-quarters, when Ethelred marched at the head of his subjects to dislodge them, both armies met at Merden near Devizes (Plott, in his Nat. Hist. of Ox. and Kennett, in his Parochial Antiq; contend for its being Mestur in Oxfordshire) where the Saxon Army was defeated, and King Ethelred wounded. It is said that Alfred, at great personal risk, defended his wounded brother, and had him conveyed to Wittingham, where he soon after died, and was buried at Winbourn in Dorsetshire; leaving his kingdom to Alfred.

Alfred, who is justly called the Great, and who has ever been esteemed the pride and glory of the English nation, began his reign under the greatest disadvantages. Many of his cities, towns, and villages, were reduced to ashes, his best provinces almost depopulated, his bravest captains and soldiers slain in battle, and a powerful army of cruel barbarians, in the very heart of his country. Yet, undiscouraged, he did every thing which it was possible for the most consummate wisdom to conceive, or the most intrepid courage to perform. From the superior number however of the enemy, and their continually receiving fresh accessions from Denmark, Alfred, after many desperate struggles in which he had been forsaken by the Mercians and Northumbrians found it no longer possible to oppose the victorious Danes, and judging it wiser to suspend his offensive operations, till more favourable circumstances arose, he ordered his faithful followers to conceal themselves awhile in the forest of Selwood, whilst he himself assuming the character of a peasant, retired to a neat-herd's cottage. It is at the time of dismissing his troops, that the Poem opens.

40, 41.—page 34. *'The Danes present the javelin.'*

Asserius tells us, that if thirty thousand of the Danes were killed in one day, there arrived as many again on the next.

The Danes, on several occasions, during the reign of Ethelred, having experienced the valour of Alfred, who fought in the army of his brother, soon after his accession to the throne consented to a peace, and agreed to retire out of the West-Saxon territories. In consequence of this agreement, they evacuated Reading, and retired to London, where they spent the winter.—Burthred, who then governed Mercia, unable to dislodge

these troublesome inmates by force, prevailed upon them by many valuable presents to leave his kingdom, from whence they marched into the country of the East-Angles, and fixed their head-quarters for some time at Torksay. Having destroyed every thing in these parts, they returned (874) into Mercia, of which they made an entire conquest; obliging Burthred to abandon his country in despair, who retired to Rome, where he soon after died. The Danish army then entered the kingdom of Wessex, and penetrated as far as Wareham in Dorsetshire, which they surprised and sacked. Alfred, roused by this invasion from the short repose he had enjoyed since the last peace with the Danes, and finding himself unprepared to meet them in the field, (this being the largest army that had ever appeared in England, commanded by Ivar and Hubba, the sons of Regner, who was slain by Ella,) entered into a second negotiation with them, which ended in a peace. But these faithless barbarians violated the treaty, almost as soon as it was made, by surprising the city of Exeter. Alfred now convinced that nothing could preserve his country from being conquered but a brave resistance, collected all his forces, and invested Exeter by land, whilst his newly built fleet, blocked up the mouth of the river Ex, to prevent them from being succoured by sea; when the Danes capitulated, entering into the most solemn engagements, never more to molest the West-Saxons. They now retired to Mercia, where they wintered. While they remained in Mercia, they received a large reinforcement of their countrymen; which determined them once more to return into the kingdom of Wessex, and having seized Chippenham, they over-ran the whole country. (878.) The West Saxons, who, animated by the example and exhortation of their King, had made so noble a stand in defence of their country, when all the rest of England had submitted, were now, after a succession of severe defeats, obliged to flee before the victorious Danes.

42.—page 35. '*Cypenham.*'

Chippenham in Wiltshire.

43.—page 35. '*From either Anglia.*'

Alfred at the beginning of his reign, had summoned the Mercians, and the Northumbrians to join him with their whole forces, but these infatuated nations taking advantage of the king's distresses, and unmindful of the danger to which the whole country was exposed, refused to comply.

44.—page 37. '*Oddune.*'

Oddune was Alderman, or Earl of Devon, a man distinguished for all virtues, a great commander, and the most faithful of Alfred's friends. Alfred divided Magistrates into Tithing-men, Hundredaries, Trithing-men or Lathgrievs, and Aldermen or Earls.

A TITHING consisted of ten families. Henry says, Every freeman who wished to enjoy the protection of the laws, and not to be treated as a vagabond, was under the necessity of being admitted a member of the tithing where he and his family resided; and in order to obtain this admission, it was necessary to have supported a good reputation; because all the members of each tithing became mutual pledges and sureties for each other; and the whole tithing surety to the king, for all its members.

Each tithing formed within itself, a little state or commonwealth, and chose one of its most respectable members for its head, who received the name of Tithing-man or Borsholder. As all the members of a tithing were mutual sureties, so they were commonly friends, fighting together in the day of battle, and usually eating at one table in time of peace. If one sustained a loss by fire, the death of cattle, or any other accident, all the rest contributed to repair the loss: if one of the neighbours became poor, the rest supported him: all the members attended the funerals, marriages and festivals of the tithing, and if one of the members behaved ill he was formally expelled the society, which was one of the greatest calamities in which a man could be involved. From that moment he sustained a total loss of character, became an outlaw, and was exposed to a thousand insults.

The next superior Magistrate, was called a HUNDREDARY, who presided over a district that contained ten tithings: it belonged to him to appoint the time and place for the meeting of the Hundred court, to preside in that court, to see that its sentences were executed, and to inspect the arms belonging to the Hundred. For the performances of those offices, he received one third of all the fines imposed in his court, with a certain quantity of corn from each member, for maintaining his dogs, which destroyed wolves, foxes, and other noxious animals. The Hundredary was the captain of his hundred in time of war, and the civil Magistrate in time of peace. The government of towns and cities was much the same as the Hundreds: the chief Magistrate was called the TOWN-GRIEVE, and if it was a seaport, the PORT GRIEVE. The next in office above the Hundredary, was called the TRITHINGMAN or LATHGRIEVE, who presided over that part of the county which was called a LATH, consisting of three, four, or more Hundreds. The next officer to the Trithingman was called an ALDERMAN, or EARL. This situation was always filled by a person of the highest dignity and greatest power, who in his district was a little King, and who assumed the title of Sub-king or Prince, in subscribing charters and other deeds. There was a regular chain of appeals between the different courts of judicature. The decision of the TITHING-COURT was liable to be reversed by the HUNDRED-COURT, that of the hundred-court by the TRITHING-COURT, the Trithing-court by the SHIRE-COURT, at which the Earl presided, or otherwise his Shiregrieve: and the decision of the latter was still liable to be reversed by the King. Verstegan says, "The noble King Egbert having given to our Country the name of England, the good and rightly renowned King Alfred did afterwards divide it into shires, that is, as we now would say, into Shares or Parts."

45.—page 38. '*My Western friends.*'

West-Saxony was the hereditary dominion of Alfred—This division of the heptarchy, was very small for a long time after it was erected into a kingdom, but having been blessed with a long succession of great Princes, it gradually increased, and at length gave a nominal King to England in the person of Egbert, and a real one in that of Alfred, from whom is descended in the female line, our present Gracious Queen, Victoria, by the marriage of Henry I. with a daughter of the King of Scotland, whose mother was a West-Saxon Princess.

46.—page 38. ‘*From the night-prowling wolf.*’

During the Heptarchy and for some centuries afterwards, wolves were very common in England. King Edgar attempted to effect their extirpation, by commuting the punishment for certain crimes into the acceptance of a number of wolves’ tongues from each criminal; and in Wales by converting the tax on gold and silver into an annual tribute of 300 wolves’ heads. Notwithstanding these endeavours, his schemes proved abortive. Some centuries after the reign of the Saxon monarch, these animals increased to such a degree, as to become the object of royal attention: accordingly, Edward the first issued out his mandate to Peter Corbet, to superintend and assist in the destruction of wolves in the several counties of Gloucester, Worcester, Hereford, Salop, and Stafford. In the adjacent county of Derby, certain persons held their lands as one condition, that they should destroy a certain number of wolves, which greatly infested those parts. In Athelstan’s reign, wolves so abounded in Yorkshire, that a retreat was built at Flixton in that county, *to defend passengers from the wolves, that they should not be devoured by them*; and such ravages did these animals make during the winter, that the Saxons distinguished the month of January by the name of *wolf month*.

There is a spot in Cumberland, (Hutchinson says,) called Wotobank, a name which it received from the following circumstance: “A lord of Beckermont, with his lady and servants, were one time hunting the wolf; during the chase this lord missed his lady; after a long and painful search, they, at last, to his inexpressible sorrow, found her body lying on this hill or bank, slain by a wolf, and the ravenous beast in the very act of tearing it to pieces, till frightened by the dogs. In the transport of his grief, the first words which the sorrowful husband uttered, were ‘Woe to this bank;’ since vulgarly called ‘Wotobank.’ The last wolf killed in Scotland, Pennant says, was by Sir Evan Cameron, in the year 1680.

47.—page 38.

That God hath dealt a crown—
But given a friend. See *Note 44*.

48.—page 39. ‘*A warrior’s casque.*’

The casque, or helmet, of the Saxons, was of a conical shape, without vizors, or any other protection to the face than a piece of iron, which reached from the front of the helmet to the point of the nose.

49.—page 40. ‘*In Wilton’s pious house.*’

Wilton Abbey situated near Salisbury was greatly enriched by Alfred. Monasteries in Alfred’s reign were constantly sought after and plundered by the Danes, on which occasion, great numbers of the clergy were put to the sword, or buried in the ruins of their Monasteries; and the mildest fate they could expect, when they fell into the hands of their enemies, was to be sold for slaves. Between the years 857 and 871, it is said that almost all the few remaining Monasteries which had escaped the former ravages of the Danes, were destroyed, and their wretched inhabitants put to the sword or burnt in the flames which consumed their places of abode. In these times the Danes plundered and burnt the Monasteries of Bardney, Croyland, Peterborough, and Ely, putting to death the whole of

the inhabitants. They also destroyed the Monks of Beverly, and the Monasteries of Whitby and Gilling. Loudon was taken by the Danes in the reign of Ethelwolf, and the inhabitants massacred. Bath, Frome, besides many other Towns, and Villages unnumbered, in the West-Saxon kingdom, were also taken and destroyed by the Danes.

When Alfred commenced his reign, England was in the profoundest ignorance. Learning which had begun to decline about the middle of the eighth century, was almost quite extinguished in the ninth, and that general darkness which had been a little dissipated by the appearance of Aldhelm, Beda, Egbert, Cædman, Alcuinus and John Scot, returned again. Alfred in one of his letters to Wulfsig, bishop of Worcester, regrets the ignorance of the age he lived in, in the following words: "At my accession to the throne (871) all knowledge and learning were extinguished in the English nation, insomuch, that there were very few to the South of the Humber who understood the common prayers of the church (for two hundred years before, learning had been almost confined to Northumberland) or were capable of translating a single sentence of Latin into English, but to the South of the Thames (including his own dominions of West Saxons) I cannot recollect so much as one who could do this." Alfred the Great, therefore appeared at a time and under circumstances the most unfavorable that can be conceived for the acquisition of learning, when the small remains of science were wholly confined to cloisters, and when knowledge was considered as a disgrace rather than an ornament to a prince. He however possessed an insatiable thirst for knowledge; and reading and study became his chief delight. But still he met with great difficulties for want of proper help. "I have heard him (says Asser) lament it with many sighs, as the greatest misfortune of his life, that when he was young, and had leisure for study, he could find no masters to instruct him. For some years before and several years after his accession to the throne, he was so incessantly engaged in wars against the Danes, that he had little time for study, but of that little he did not lose a moment. When he had restored the tranquillity of his country, he redoubled his efforts to improve his mind in knowledge. By this constant application, Alfred became one of the greatest scholars of the age in which he lived. He spoke the Latin language with as much fluency as his native tongue, and understood though he did not speak Greek. He was an eloquent speaker, an acute philosopher, an excellent mathematician, musician, historian, and architect, and the Prince of the Saxon-poets." Alfred did not prosecute his studies as a private man, and for his own improvement only, but as a great prince, and for the benefit of his subjects, whose ignorance he beheld with unspeakable concern. The erudition which Alfred acquired, he employed like a great and good king, in composing original works, and in translating others out of Latin into the Saxon. Alfred did not however neglect the most effectual mode of reviving learning among his subjects, namely, by erecting and endowing schools and other seminaries, of which Oxford is a glorious example.

50.—page 41.

Led on by Hubba,
—that disastrous Pirate.

Pirate was the general name by which all the inhabitants of the North were distinguished who had any intercourse with Britain. Such, for

many years, had been the atrocities of these pirates on the different coasts of England, that their very name struck terror into the inhabitants, and occasioned the parts wherever they landed to be immediately evacuated by the natives. These Pirates, "rejecting labour and civil habitation, gave themselves to no other course of life, nor sought they other sustentation, than only theft, robbery and violence, practising the use of the shipping for the love of piracie, and like flights of wasps or hornets, coasting all about; whatsoever fertile place, by any, was discovered, the whole swarm soon seized upon it, and made a prey of the plenty, sucking out the sweets of others labour, and devouring whatsoever others industry had with their sweat prepared. The maritime spirit of the Danes increased so much under the reign of Regner Lodbrog, that during his time, more of his subjects dwelt on the sea than on the land. The resentment therefore of Ivar and Hubba, from the premature death of their father, was proportioned to their capacity for doing mischief, the full force of which Alfred at this time experienced."—*Spelman*.

51.—page 41. *'Shouting draw near.'*

The Danes proceeded to an attack with loud shouts. They clashed their arms, they invoked with a great noise the name of Odin, and sometimes sang hymns in his praise. The Danes made an intrenchment with their baggage round the camp, where the women and children remained during the engagement, animating their husbands, who, if they happened to be beaten, in vain fled there for refuge, the women most commonly only waited their return, in order to cut them in pieces. The women who attended armies, were considered as sharing the fight with their husbands, and in case of a defeat were often indiscriminately slaughtered by the victorious enemy. Many instances occurred, among the Danes, of women fighting gallantly by the side of their husbands. Many of the pirates accustomed themselves, before a battle, to exhibit paroxysms of brutal insanity. They studied to resemble wolves or maddening dogs, biting their shields, and howling like tremendous beasts. On these occasions, in order to intimidate their enemies, as well as to stimulate themselves to greater excesses of courage, they roared and excited themselves to a degree of strength which resembled bears, and then rushed to every crime and horror, which the most desperate enthusiasm could perpetrate.

52.—page 41. *'Relics and shrines, all was one overthrow.'*

At the commencement of Alfred's reign, superstition had made great progress; particularly in an extravagant veneration for relics, in which the priests at Rome possessed a very gainful trade. Few good christians considered themselves safe from the machinations of the Devil, unless they carried the relics of some saint about their persons, and no church could be dedicated, without a decent proportion of this sacred trumpery. Stories of dreams, visions, and miracles, were propagated without a blush by the clergy, and believed without a doubt by the laity. Extraordinary watchings, fastings, and other arts of tormenting the body, in order to save the soul became frequent, and it began to be believed that a journey to Rome was the most direct road to Heaven. It was about this time that some great men who were not very fond of going through the fastings and prayers enjoined by their confessors, proposed to hire poor people

to fast in their steads. The remains of all persons who were at all eminent for their piety, were very zealously sought after by the ecclesiastics. And that Monastery which possessed the greatest number of relics and shrines, was most visited by pilgrims, from whom the monks derived considerable advantage. When Cuthbert, archbishop of Canterbury died, as his predecessors had been interred by the monks of St. Augustine, in their Monastery *without* the walls of Canterbury, they considered his corpse as a sort of perquisite to which they had a right. Cuthbert however, formed the determination of depriving them of his remains, and for that purpose obtained a formal permission from the king, to be buried in his own cathedral *in* Canterbury. When he found his end drawing near, he directed his domestics to put his body in the grave the instant he expired, or at least before they published an account of his death; which they accordingly performed. When the monks of St. Augustine, on hearing of the archbishop's death, came in solemn order to take possession of his remains, (for the purpose of erecting for him a splendid shrine, conformable to the miracles they expected the relics of so good a man would perform) they were told that he was already buried at his own request in his own church; at which they became most violently enraged, calling him rogue, fox, viper, and other opprobrious names. In the eighth century the sale of relics became a very profitable trade to the clergy, and especially to the monks, who were fortunate in making daily discoveries of the precious remains of some departed saint, which they soon converted into gold and silver. In this traffic they had all the opportunities they could desire of imposing counterfeit wares, as it was no easy thing to distinguish the great toe of a saint from that of a sinner, after it had lain some centuries in the grave. The pope and the clergy of Rome carrying on a most lucrative trade in them, of which they never wanted an inexhaustible store. Kings, princes, and wealthy prelates purchased whole legs and arms of Apostles, or pieces of the real cross, (of which it is said there was a sufficient quantity in the different parts of Europe to build a first rate man of war) while persons of inferior property, were obliged to be contented with the toes and fingers of inferior saints. Angelnoth, archbishop of Canterbury, when he went to Rome in 1021 purchased of the pope an arm of St. Augustine, bishop of Hippo, for one hundred talents, or six thousand pounds weight of silver.

Inguifus describes some of the relics of Turketul, Abbot of Croyland. "He had a thumb," he says, "of the Apostle St. Bartholomew, which Abbot Turketul constantly carried about him, and with which he crossed himself in all times of danger, tempests, and thunder. This most precious relic was presented to him by the Emperor. He had also a lock of the hair of Mary the mother of God, given to him by the King of France, inclosed in a gold box. He had also a bone of St. Leodegarius the Bishop and Martyr, which he received from the prince of Aquitain.

The completest assemblage of relics that ever appeared, was that probably in the Abbey of St. Denis, before the revolution. *Luther* tells us, "The bishop of Mentz bragged that he had a flame of the bush which Moses beheld burning, and that at Compostel in Spain, they showed for a holy relic, the ensign of victory which Christ had in hell." He further tells us, that "A Dutchman making his confession to a mass priest at Rome, promised by an oath to keep secret whatsoever the priest should impart to him, until he came into Germanie; whereupon, the priest gave

him a leg of the Ass on which Christ rode into Jerusalem, very neatly bound up in a silken cloth, and said, This is the holy relique on which the Lord Christ corporally did sit, and with his sacred legs touched this Ass's leg. Then was the Dutchman wondrous glad, and carried the same holy relique with him into Germanie. Now when he came upon the borders, he bragged of his holy relique, in the presence of *four* others his comrades, and showed it unto them, when it appeared, each of them had likewise received a leg of the same Ass from the same priest, upon which without suspecting a deception they concluded with great admiration, that that Ass had five legs."

53.—page 41. '*Normans have murdered them.*'

The vast extent of Scandinavia, in the ninth century was divided among different people, who were little known to the rest of the world, and who were only described by some general name, of which the most common was *Norman*, or Normanders; that is, men from the North. Normandy in France received its name from having been peopled by these Normans.

54.—page 42. '*Their monstrous bucklers.*'

The Danish bucklers were most commonly made of wood, bark, or leather, except for commanders or warriors of distinction, which were then made of iron or brass, ornamented with rude painting or sculpture, often finely gilt, and sometimes covered over with silver or gold. The Danes very highly estimated their shields, and ordained great penalties for those who lost them in battle. They were commonly of a long oval form, *the height of the bearer*, in order to protect him from arrows, darts, and stones. Their shields were made use of to carry the dead to the grave, to terrify the enemy by clashing their arms against them, and to form upon occasion a kind of shelter or tent, when they were obliged to encamp in the open field.

55.—page 43. '*And like yourselves fought resolute.*'

Alfred fought nine pitched battles with the Danes, the year after he ascended the throne.

56.—page 43. '*To Selwood's forest shade.*'

At the time the Romans invaded Britain there were three great forests in it, the Caledonian forest, and the forest of the Coritani, which contained several towns, and the seat of a whole nation within it, and included nearly the five counties of Lincoln, Nottingham, Derby, Leicester, and Rutland; but the third was still larger than either, and swept across the south of the Island, to the extent of one hundred and fifty miles, ranging from Somersetshire into Kent. In the ninth century great encroachments had been made on these forests, the most southern of which was divided into many distinct ones, bearing different names, of which Selwood was one, lying in Wiltshire. The whole of Europe was nearly as much covered with forests as this Island; the most remarkable of which was the Hercynian, extending from Switzerland to Transylvania, sixty days' journey in length, and twelve in breadth. The forest to the south of England was sometimes called the Weald or Woald of Kent and contained *Whitaker* says, "scarcely any other inhabitants than Deer, Hogs, and Wolves."

Alfred was the first of the Saxon Kings who was sensible of the imperfect state of fortification throughout the kingdom, and who endeavoured to provide a remedy. He spent much of his time and revenue in re-building the ruined walls of London and other cities, which had been destroyed by the Danes, and in building forts in different convenient places, for the protection of his subjects. "What shall I say (says Asser his contemporary) of the cities which he repaired, and the forts and castles which he built of stone and wood, with admirable art; in doing which he met with much opposition and trouble from the indolence of his people, who could not be persuaded to submit to any labour for the common safety? How often and how earnestly did he beseech, entreat, and at length command and threaten his bishops, aldermen, and nobles, to imitate his example, and build castles for the defence of themselves, their families, and friends? but alas! such was their invincible sloth and inactivity, that all his persuasions, commands, and threats had little influence on them; and they either did not build at all, or did not begin to build till it was too late. It is true indeed, when they beheld their parents, children, wives, friends, and servants, killed or taken prisoners, and their goods and property destroyed, they bewailed their own folly, and applauded the prudence of their sovereign, whom they had before reproached."

57.—page 47. *'Where ghosts might walk by instinct.'*

Agreeable to the superstition of the times, when the universal agency of supernatural beings was credited, and the most common appearances ascribed to its influence. Alfred's great mind anticipated the age in which he lived.

58.—page 48. *'This is our all, old man, one half is thine.'*

Sir John Spelman states (from Asserinus) that while Alfred and Alswitha lived in retirement, it happened one day during the winter, which proved uncommonly severe, that he had dismissed all his attendants to endeavour to obtain provisions. When they were gone, the King, as was his custom, whenever he had an opportunity, took a book and began reading, whilst Alswitha was employed in her domestic concerns. They had not long continued thus engaged, before a poor pilgrim accidentally passing that way, knocked at the door, and begged they would give him something to eat. The humane King called to Alswitha, and desired her to give the poor man part of what provision they had; the Queen finding only one loaf, brought it to Alfred, at the same time representing the distresses the family would labour under, should their party return unsuccessful. The King, not deterred, by this scanty view, from his charitable purpose, cheerfully gave the poor pilgrim one half of the loaf: telling Alswitha at the same time, that his dependence was upon Providence. Soon after, his friends returned with an abundant supply. The name of this pilgrim, we are told, was *Nidor*.

59.—page 49. *'Yonder Tor.'*

Glastonbury, Tor: a high conical hill in the neighbourhood of Glastonbury.

60.—page 49. '*Faggots.*'

Though coal was known both to the Romans as well as Britons, yet it does not appear to have been generally used as fuel in this Island. For ages after its discovery, wood was preferred, probably from the extensive tracks of forest with which the country abounded, presenting a ready and almost inexhaustible supply. In the year 852, a grant was made of some lands by the Abbey of Peterborough, under the reservation of certain boons and payments in kind to the Monastery; as "one night's entertainment, ten vessels of Welch, and two of common ale; sixty cart loads of wood, and twelve of pit-coal," from which the proportionate consumption may pretty accurately be judged of. *Whitaker* speaks of various portions of coal having been found under and near the Roman way to Ribchester, in the vicinity of which, collections of cinders, from various coal forges have been discovered.

61.—page 50. '*The mother's shriek.*'

All historians concur in saying that the Danes exercised in this Island the most inhuman cruelties, rioting in the blood of man, woman, and children, and making spoil, as well as prey, of every thing they came near.

62.—page 50. '*Ethelney.*'

See 97.—page 87.

63.—page 51. '*Glastonbury.*'

It is generally allowed that the first Christian Church which was built in England was at Glastonbury in Somersetshire. Some historians have zealously maintained, that after the ascension of our Lord, the scribes and pharisees having raised a persecution in Jerusalem against the faithful, and having put to death Stephen, the proto-martyr, the rest of Christ's disciples were dispersed into many different nations: when St. Philip proceeded into the country of the Franks, converted and baptized many; and being zealous to propagate the faith, chose twelve of his disciples, and sent them as missionaries into Britain, who arrived in the year 63, under the immediate subjection of Joseph of Arimathea: on which occasion the first church at Glastonbury was built. In after ages, Glastonbury Abbey became famous for the number of its splendid shrines, for the magnificence of its structure, and for the wealth and liberality of its ecclesiastics. The Abbot lived in a princely manner, having the title of *Lord*, and a seat in parliament. The revenue of the Abbey at the time of the Reformation, it is said, amounted to forty thousand pounds per annum, besides seven large parks, well stocked with deer. The last Abbot (Richard Whitting) who had one hundred monks and three hundred domestics, was hanged in his pontificals, with two of his monks, on the Tor, a high hill in the neighbourhood, for refusing to take the oath of supremacy to Henry the VIII.

64.—page 51. '*And where the singing is both night and day.*'

The public worship of the Anglo-Saxons, consisted chiefly in Psalmody in which both the clergy and laity took much delight. In some cathedrals, and larger monasteries, this exercise was continued night and day without intermission, by a constant succession of priests and singers, with

whom the laity occasionally joined. "Both the ears and minds (says an antiquary) of the people of all ranks, were so much charmed with the incessant melody of the monks, that it contributed not a little to increase their zeal and liberality in building monasteries." This taste for Psalmody very much increased after the introduction of organs into the churches, in the ninth century, "Whose pipes of copper being winded by bellows, and furnished with proper stops and keys, sent forth a most loud and ravishing music, that was heard at a great distance."

Even the private devotions of the good people of those times, consisted almost entirely in singing a prodigious number of psalms; which was esteemed the most effectual way of appeasing the wrath of Heaven, and making an atonement for their own sins, or the sins of their friends, living or dead. It was commonly an article in those voluntary associations, called *Gilds* or *Fraternities*, so frequent among the Anglo-Saxons, that each member should sing two psalms every day, one for all the members of the fraternity that were living, and another for all who had been members, but were dead; and that at the death of a member, each of the surviving should sing six psalms for the repose of his soul. All kinds of penances might be redeemed by singing a sufficient number of psalms and pater-nosters. For example, if a penitent was condemned to fast a certain number of days, he might redeem as many of them as he pleased, at the rate of singing six pater-nosters, and the 119th psalm six times over for one day's fast. Psalm-singing was a kind of spiritual cash in those times, and answered the same purpose in religion which money did in trade.

65—page 51. '*Whose circling arches.*'

Architecture had made some considerable progress in Britain by the ninth century. St. Peter's at York was a noble structure, as was also Rippon; but the most famous building of the kind, was Hexham in Northumberland, a Cathedral, of which Bede thus speaks. "Its foundations, and the many subterraneous rooms there artfully disposed; and above ground, the great variety of buildings to be seen, all of hewn stone, and supported by sundry kinds of pillars and many porticos, and set off by the surprising length and height of the walls, surrounded with various mouldings and bands curiously wrought, and the turnings and windings of the passages, sometimes ascending, or descending by winding stairs to the different parts of the building, all which it is not easy to express or describe by words, &c. neither is there any church of the like sort to be found on this side the Alps." From the estimation in which Glastonbury has been held, no doubt can be entertained, of its having been equal, or nearly so, to any building of the kind in England, although the works of no historian have reached us which gives a particular description of the whole of the Abbey as it stood in the ninth century. Edgar and many other of the Saxon kings were buried here, as was also the British king Arthur, whose tomb was discovered by the following accident. Henry the second, who was the first of the Plantagenet line, being in the last year of his reign, at Pembroke, and hearing there a Welsh bard singing to his harp the story of Arthur, concluded with an account of his death and burial at Glastonbury, between two pyramids: the king instantly gave orders that the matter should be inquired into, and the body dug up. This

'being done as the king directed, at the depth of seven feet was found a large stone, whereon was fastened a leaden cross with this inscription in Latin, on the inside. "Here lies the famous king Arthur, buried in the Isle of Avalon." Digging still lower, they found the king's body in the trunk of a tree, his beautiful queen lying by him, with long flowing hair, in colour bright as gold, which however sank into dust when touched. The king's bones were very large sized, and in his skull were ten wounds, all cicatrized, except that of which he died. This discovery was made in the year 1181, as *Giraldus Cambrensis* tells us, who saw these bones, and examined the whole affair attentively. There was also a table containing this story, set up in the Monastery of Glastonbury, and the leaden cross with the inscription remained there till the dissolution of the Monastery, where it was seen by the great antiquary *Leland*. But though the Architecture of Cathedrals was so respectable, domestic architecture, at this period, was in a humble state. Cottages, and the dwellings of the lowest classes have borne a strong resemblance in all ages, consisting, as their chief features, of a door and a window: but the houses of the Thanes in the ninth century, rarely exceeded one story, and exercised but a slender portion of ingenuity in their construction. The Welch appear to have been even more inattentive to show than the English; as will thus appear: The palace of the Kings of Wales, where the nobility assembled for making laws, was called the *white palace*, because the walls of it were woven with white wands. By the laws of Wales, whoever burnt or destroyed the King's palace, was to be required to pay one pound and eighty pence, besides one hundred and twenty-pence for each of the adjacent buildings, or offices. These were the dormitory, the kitchen, the chapel, the granary, the bakehouse, the store-house, the stable, and the dog-house. From which it appears that the Welch King's palace, and its offices at this time were valued only at about five pounds.—*Howill*.—*Henry*.

As the Welch King's vassals were required to bring only an axe, to erect the royal castles, it may be inferred that, at this period they were built only of wood.—See an Essay on this subject, in the *Archæologia*, by the Hon. Daines Barrington.

66.—page 53. 'Eagles.'

Eagles formerly were more common in this Island than they are at present. Smith, in his History of Kerry, relates, that a poor man got a comfortable subsistence for his family, during a summer of famine, out of an eagle's nest, by robbing the eagles of the food which the old ones brought, whose attendance he protracted beyond the natural time, by clipping the wings and retarding the flight of the former. This practice is said to be still common in the North of Europe. Pennant speaks of two infants who were once carried off by eagles from a village in Scotland.

67.—page 54. 'Our wants will aid.'

Monasteries were the Inns of this age; certain parts of the income being reserved for pilgrims and travellers.

68.—page 54. 'Mid shrines and fretted pillars.'

The shrines of Saints among the Anglo-Saxons were decorated with a profusion of gold and silver ornaments: this occasioned the Danes to seek

after them with the greatest avidity. The importance which was attached to the possession of the remains of a saint, may be judged of by the following narration from *Ingulphus*, "*St. Withburga*, was buried at the village of Derham. The Bishop of Winchester and the Abbot of Ely wanting to get possession of her remains, obtained a licence from the king for that purpose; they however thought it advisable to proceed with caution, as it was not likely the inhabitants of the place would easily part with so valuable a treasure without resistance, if their intention should have been publicly known; and therefore it was concluded, to carry their design into execution with as much secrecy as such an affair would admit. On the day appointed, the Abbot and some of the most active and prudent of the Monks, attended by the servants of the Abbey all well armed, set out on their journey; and on their arrival at Derham were received by the inhabitants with great respect, who imagined they were arrived only to take possession of the place, without suspecting any other object. The Abbot on this occasion held a court for the administration of justice in the usual way; and afterwards invited the people to a feast, having beforehand concerted measures for carrying on his design. At the time fixed, the Abbot and the monks took occasion to withdraw from the people in the hall, and immediately repaired to the Church, under colour of performing their regular devotions, but in reality to prepare matters for carrying their plan into execution. Night coming on, the company in the hall, having spent the day in feasting retired by degrees, every one to his rest, whilst the Monks were employed in the Church, in forcing open the tomb of *St. Withburga*. Having arrived at the body, they got every thing in readiness for carrying it off. About the middle of the night, taking the coffin, in which the remains of the Saint were inclosed, on their shoulders, they conveyed it to a carriage which was provided for that purpose, the servants of the Abbot being placed as guards round about the body, to defend it. In this order they set forward towards Brandon, a village about twenty miles distant, where there is a small navigable river leading towards the *Isle of Ely*: and on their arrival there, they found some boats waiting for them, and immediately embarked with their treasure and set sail.—In the mean time, the inhabitants of Derham having discovered that the body *St. Withburga* was carried off by the Monks, the alarm was given, and the Town's folk came flocking together: all agreed to pursue them, and if possible to recover the prey: so arming themselves with whatever they could readily meet with, they made the best of their way to Brandon, but were too late; for the Monks were gone off, and had proceeded a considerable way down the river: they however marched by the side of the river and at length overtook them; but, not being provided with boats, could not come at them: so that after spending some time in vain threats and reproaches, till they were tired, and finding it to no purpose, they were forced to give over the pursuit, and return home again; leaving the Monks to continue the rest of their voyage without further molestation. They landed the same day about a mile from the Church, where they were received with great joy and triumph by all sorts of people, who came thither with the Monks and Clergy to meet them; and the body of *St. Withburga* being put into a hearse, was then conveyed by land to Ely, and with solemn procession and singing praise to God, was deposited in the Church, next to *St. Etheldreda*, *St. Sexburga*, and *St. Ermenilda*. This memorable translation of *St.*

Withburga's body from Derham to Ely, was on the eighth of July in the year of our Lord, 974." The Monks at this time were spiritual virtuosos, and no action obtained more general commendation, than an ingenious and successful mode, practised by one Monastery for despoiling another Monastery of its favourite relic.

69.—page 54. '*The broidered vest.*'

The teaching of the art of embroidering appears to have been one part of polite education amongst the Anglo-Saxon ladies, and their performances therein were often such as to excite the notice of the ancient historians. In a charter which Wiglaf, King of Mercia, granted to the Abbey of Croyland, mention is made of the king's golden veil, *embroidered with the history of the destruction of Troy*, which he gave to the said Abbey, to be hung up annually in the Church, on his birth day.

An embroidered work is still in existence, supposed to have been executed by Matilda, wife of William the Conqueror, and the ladies of her Court. It is commonly called the Tapestry of Bayeux, in France, and which has given more accurate information respecting the costume of that age than can be collected from all other sources. Investigators, are constantly referring to it as decisive testimony. *Henry* thus describes it. "This curious monument of antiquity is a piece or web of linen only about nineteen inches in breadth but no less than sixty seven yards in length; on which is embroidered the history of the conquest of England by William, Duke of Normandy; beginning with the embassy of Harold to the Norman court, 1065, and ending with his death, at the battle of Hastings, 1066. The many important transactions of these two busy years are represented in the clearest and most regular order in this piece of needle work; which contains many hundred figures of men (in the dress of the age) horses, castles, churches, arms, &c. all executed in their due proportions, and proper colours, with inscriptions over them, to throw light upon the history. Though Queen Matilda, directed this work, yet the greatest part was probably, executed by Englishwomen: for we are told by a contemporary writer, that the Anglo-Saxon Ladies were so famous for their skill in needle-work, and embroidering in gold, that those elegant manufactures were called *Anglicum opus*, (English work.)"—See Note 177.

70.—page 56.

'In a few more years
—No Saxon blood will flow!'

Hollingshed says. 'Egbert caused a commission to be directed into all parts of the realm, to give commandment that from henceforward, all people inhabiting within this land, should be called Englishmen, and not Saxons, and that the land itself should be called England.'—An organic change slow in its establishment.

71.—page 56. '*Sea-Kings.*'

Sea-King was the title which distinguished most of the maritime Chieftains of this age. The Sea-Kings were sovereigns who possessed neither country nor subjects, and yet filled every region with blood and misery. All the monarchs of Europe beheld them with horror. Without an acre of territorial property, without any towns, or visible birth-place;

with no wealth but their ships, no force but their crews, and no hope but from their swords, the Sea-Kings swarmed upon the boisterous ocean; visited like the fiends of vengeance every district they could approach, and maintained a fearful empire on the watery element. They literally lived amongst the waves. Many of them triumphed in never having slept under a smoky roof, or drunk mead by their own fire side. From the mistaken ideas which prevailed in this barbarous age, the avocations of the Sea-King were esteemed the most honourable. Kings and Nobles of every country in the North were in the constant habit as the spring advanced of furnishing all their Sons (except the eldest) with ships and crews, and encouraged them to set forward boldly, on their plundering expeditions. As the Winter drew near these maritime adventurers who had escaped death, commonly returned, laden with spoils, consisting of every necessary of life, clothes, domestic utensils, cattle, which they killed and prepared on the shores which they had ravaged. But these Sea-Kings were not the only, or the chief Pirates in these days. The real Kings of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden often set their subjects an example, and with large navies invaded their neighbours, or assaulted distant Kingdoms. In the ninth century the very shores of the Mediterranean swarmed with them.

The Sea-Kings were sometimes called "Vekings" or "Kings of the Bays" a name which excites a terrible image in the mind. The timorous Merchants of the ninth century were in the habit of coasting along the shore, when they constantly dreaded, on doubling every cape, or in passing every creek an irruption of the "Kings of the Bays" who frequently lay in ambush, (like spiders) ready to burst on their devoted prey.

72.—page 56. '*The Christian.*'

Christianity was better understood, in this Island, in the eighth and ninth century, than it was some centuries afterward. Many of the Ecclesiastics were distinguished for their piety and good sense. This may chiefly have arisen from the little influence which the *Pope* at this time had obtained over the English clergy. When Cuthbert, Bishop of Canterbury, assembled a council of the Bishops and chief clergy of his province, in the year 747, to deliberate on the adoption of certain ecclesiastical regulations, Boniface, Archbishop of Mentz, sent them the resolutions of the council lately held in his Diocese, as a guide for themselves; in which the canon concerning the unity of the Church ran thus: "We have agreed in our synod to the confession of the catholic faith, and agree to continue in unity and subjection to the church of Rome; and desire to be subject to St. Peter, and his vicar, to the end of our lives, that we may be esteemed members of that church committed to St. Peter's care." The English canon however on the same subject did not even mention the Church or Bishop of Rome; being thus expressed: "Sincere love and christian unity and affection ought to be amongst all the clergy in the world, in deed and judgment, (without flattery of any one's person) as the servants of one Lord, and fellow-labourers in the same Gospel: so that however separated by the distance of place, they may notwithstanding be united in the same judgment, and serve God in one spirit; in the same faith, hope, and charity; daily praying for each other, that every one may faithfully persevere to the end, in the discharge of his holy functions."

73.—page 57. '*Tutor'd in that best school, adversity.*'

Spelman says, "The education of Alfred was according to the usage of the Saxon nobles, the hunting of wild beasts and other sports of the field, wherewith he was inured to labour, hunger, watching, patience, and trial of wits, and which made him the hardier, toward the toleration of any fortune. Thirsting more after literature than either possession or sovereignty, he laments to himself the unhappiness of his country that could not afford him one man that could teach him the liberal arts and sciences. This affected him the more, from having seen the court of Rome (where only letters flourished) so that his native country appeared barbarous in his eyes. But *He* that had a work for him to do, of which even he little thought, had provided him a school which though nothing acceptable in appearance, was far more proper to enable him for the service he was to do, than were the schools of letters, which was the school of Travel and Adversity." The benefits of adversity and sorrow have been happily noticed by Sir Walter Scott.—'Religion is most frequently impressed on the mind during the seasons of affliction; and tears are the softened showers which cause the seed of Heaven to spring and take root in the human heart.'

'It often happens that men who arraign Religion, have first been arraigned by it, and their defiance of truth is only a reprisal of conscience.' (*Warburton.*)

74.—page 58. '*Avalonia.*'

Whitaker says, 'The apple so flourished in the immediate vicinity of Glastonbury, before the arrival of the Romans, that it was called Avalonia or the Apple Orchard.'

75.—page 59. '*Let me behold thee smile.*'

Ascer speaks in the highest terms, of the affection which subsisted between Alfred and Alswitha.

76.—page 61. '*The lofty gateway.*'

'King Ina, (*Malsbury* says) also, built at Glastonbury a chapel of gold and silver, with ornaments and vases of the same: for the construction of the chapel 2680 pounds of silver. The altar was made of 264 pounds of gold. The cup, with the patena, was 10 pounds of gold; the censor of 8 pounds 20 mancins of gold; the candlesticks of 12 pounds and a half of silver; the covers of the Book of the Holy Gospels 20 pounds 40 mancins of gold; the vessel for water, and other vessels for the altar, of 17 pounds of gold; the vessel to wash in of 8 pounds of gold; and that which contained the holy water of 20 pounds of silver; the images of Christ and the Blessed Virgin, together with those of the Twelve Apostles, of 175 pounds of silver, and 38 pounds of gold. The pall for the altar, as also the sacred habits for the priests, were interwoven with gold, and richly ornamented with precious stones. The materials of which amazing structure, with the ornaments, amounted to upwards of 365 pounds of gold, and 2887 pounds of silver.'

Glastonbury at this time was far more richly furnished than the Cathedral Church of Ely was at its dissolution, in Henry the Eighth's reign, as will appear from the following inventory:

Jewels and Plate in the Vestry.

"One pair of candlesticks, 80 ounces; 1 pix, 17 ounces; 1 standing monstrance for the sacrament, 124 ounces; 1 cross, 94 ounces; 1 cross with staff, 175 ounces; 1 ditto, 88 ounces; 1 gilt chalice, enamelled, 73; six other chalices, 124 ounces; 3 pair of censers, 124 ounces; 2 cruets, 13 ounces; 1 ball, 14 ounces; a chalice, with 2 cruets, 37 ounces; a water pot, 51 ounces; 1 pair of candlesticks, 71 ounces; 2 basons, 80 ounces; 1 ship, lacking a cover, 11 ounces; in all, 1188 ounces."—*Nicholls' Illustrations of Antient times.*

77—page 64. *'The perishable insect of a day.'*

Perhaps no King on record (even Cyrus, fabulous as is his life: Note B.) ever so zealously strove to raise the intellectual character of his subjects, as Alfred; and probably no King was ever so personally distinguished for his own mental qualities and attainments.—The following is *Speed's* character of England's most eminent King.

"Alfred was a most zealous and studious protector of the Clergy, Widows, and Orphans, liberal of his goods; wise, temperate, and just; valiant, patient in adversity, and ever religious in the service of God: a most learned prince, a skilful Musician and an excellent Poet. The best laws befitting his subjects, he translated into the English tongue: as also the Pastorals of Gregory; the History of Bede, and Boetius's Consolations of Philosophy, the Psalms of David (whose goodly reign he proposed to himself to imitate,) he likewise began to translate, but died before he could finish the same. So great a desire had he to learning that he published this act;—"We will and command that all Freemen of our Kingdom, who-soever possessing two hides of land, shall bring up their Sons in learning, till they be fifteen years of age at least, that so they may be trained to know God and to be men of understanding, and to live happily: for of a man that is born free, and yet illiterate, we repute no otherwise than of a beast, or brainlesse body, and a very sot." And for the furtherance of this his royal intent, he permitted not any office in Court, or elsewhere, unless he were learned, which incited his Nobles to the earnest pursuit of learned Arts, and to train up their Children in good letters." See also Note 49.

78—page 66. *'Of endless desolation.'*

Alfred is supposed to have lost himself on part of *Exmoor*, which at that time extended much farther into Somersetshire than it does at present. Those who now inhabit the confines of Exmoor, say that a stranger, without a compass, who should attempt to wander across it, must almost inevitably perish; which arises from the peculiar form of the moor. It consists of a succession of hills and valleys in all directions extending twenty miles. On ascending one hill, no prominent objects are perceived, but as far as the eye can reach nothing but summits of other hills of the same altitude, the approaches to which are barred by deep valleys, whilst the whole scene suggests the idea of barren and depopulated nature.

79—page 69. *'Two only days.'*

A law prevailed amongst Saxons, by which all persons were restricted from entertaining any stranger for more than two days,

This was an effectual method for preventing murders, robberies, breaches of the peace, and all crimes whatever. Alfred's institution of *Frankpledge*, made every liegeman in the kingdom a surety for his neighbour's conduct, and interested him in the detection of the guilty. A culprit could not wander to another country, and there practise iniquity, as he could not be lodged and entertained, for more than two days, without a certificate of the head-borough of his own tithing, and if he belonged to none, he was obliged to enter into the service of some person who would become answerable for him. If his character was so bad that no one would become responsible for him, he was obliged to quit the realm, for if he could not produce his pledge, on demand, he was even liable to be put to death, and to be buried in a profane place, like other public criminals.

This institution might not suit a more advanced state of society, but in Alfred's day it produced the most beneficial consequences. Soon after these laws had been enacted, it is said that there was no instance of robbery, breach of the peace, or public or private offence whatever. As a proof of the efficacy of his own statutes, Alfred caused bracelets of gold to be suspended by the high-ways, where they remained a whole year without being touched: and even if a private individual dropped his purse in the public road, at the expiration of a month he might go in quest of it, with the certainty of its being found.

These effects must be ascribed principally to the vigilance of Alfred in enforcing his own laws. The old Saxon book entitled the "*Mirror of Justices*," which was revised in the time of Edward the first, by Andrew Horne, recites many instances of wholesome severity, exercised by Alfred toward his remiss and corrupt Judges.

Alfred used to re-examine the causes, (according to Malmsbury and Brompton) which were tried in his absence, and whenever he found any injustice done out of favour or interest, he punished the judges severely. If they pleaded ignorance he sharply reprimanded them, and asked how they durst presume to take a commission to determine about property and life, when they were so wretchedly unqualified, and ordered them either to learn better, or to quit their post. Thus the Earls and great men rather than be turned out of their office with disgrace, applied themselves, in good earnest to study.

80.—page 69. '*Or shape the thong*.'

Before the discovery of flax and hemp, thongs or strips of skin were used instead of cord. This even extended to the rigging of ships, the ropes and cables of which were made of thongs. The Danes commonly used the skin of the whale for this purpose.

81.—page 70. '*Cædman*.'

An old Saxon Poet, whose productions Alfred greatly admired. The first development of Alfred's intellect displayed itself in a fondness for the only mental object which then existed to attract it: this was the Anglo-Saxon Poetry. His Step-Mother Judith was the instrument of inspiring him with so refined a taste. When Alfred was twelve years old, (Asser says) his Mother was sitting one day, surrounded by her family, with a book of Saxon Poems in her hand. With a happy judgment she

proposed it, as a gift, to him who would the soonest learn to read it. The elder princes thought the reward inadequate to the task, but Alfred captivated by the prospect of information, and pleased with the beauty of the writing, inquired if she actually intended to give it to him who would the soonest learn to read. His Mother confirmed her declaration, when Alfred with the assistance of instructors, steadily commenced the study of his Native Language, nor relaxed his efforts till he became, according to general testimony, the most learned man of his age. Of his merits as a latin translator, *Dr. Hicks*, the great Saxon Scholar, thus expresses himself. "You will pass on to Alfred's paraphrastic translation of Bede's Ecclesiastic History. Neither Cæsar, nor Cicero ever wrote more perfectly in the middle species of composition."

82.—page 71. *'The black-burnt Cakes.'*

Spelman says, 'Alfred seeing his subjects fly, the enemy in the midst of his country, and no means left either to unite or solicit the few that were remained unto him, being forced to give way unto the rage of fortune, lays aside all kingly state and show of being a prince, disposes of his family according to the present necessity, and taking the disguise of a country clown, hires himself as a servant to a neatherd. The neatherd's wife being busied one day in going to the oven with bread, and having set some cakes thereof before the fire, told the king to remember and turn them, whilst she went about her other business. Alfred being busy in trimming of his bow and arrows, and fitting his other weapons, the cakes began to burn without his observing it, till the rude housewife coming in, scolded him aloud and said, that though he would not turn them, he would be glad enough to eat them."

"The solitary place of his most residency, (*Speed* says,) was an Island inclosed with the two Rivers Thone and Parret; at their meeting in the county of Somerset, commonly called Edelingsey, where he in very poore attire disguised, was entertained into a Cowheard's house where on a time, as he sate by the fire in trimming of his bow and shafts, a cake of dow, baking upon the hearth before him, chanced to burn; the Cowheardesse coming in, and seeing him mind more his bow than his bread, in a great fury cast away, both his bow and arrowes, and checking him, as her Groom, said, 'Thou fellow! dost thou see the bread burne before thy face, and wilt not turne it? and yet art thou glad to eate it before it bee halfe baked!' little suspecting him to be the man that had been served with more delicate cakes."

The burning of the cakes, has thus been described by some unrecorded Somersetshire Bard; some 'Douglas,' who has 'died without his fame.'

'Ca'sen thee mind the cakes mon, and doss'en zee 'em burn?
I'm bound thou's eat 'em vast enough, az zoon as 'tis the turn.'

83.—page 71. *'Young man.'*

Alfred commenced his reign at the age of twenty two.

84.—page 71. *'That comely pile a ruin.'*

The Daues bore the Monks a peculiar animosity, uniformly destroying all the monasteries and religious houses they could find, and exercising in

other respects the most unheard of cruelties. *Inguifos* gives the following account of the destruction of Croyland Abbey by the Danes. "The winter being ended, the Danes took shipping and went into Lindisse in Lincolnshire, and landing at Humberstan, spoiled all that country, at which time the famous and ancient monastery of Bardney was destroyed; the monks and all others being massacred in the church without mercy; and when they had staid there all the summer, wasting the country; they at last came into Kesteven, into the same province, where they committed the like murders and desolations. Upon which Count Algar drew together all the youth of Holland, with two knights, his seneschals, called Wilbert and Leofric, who marched at the head of them, together with a brave body of 200 men, belonging to Croyland Abbey, who being all stout lusty fellows, were led by one Toly, then a monk, but formerly a famous soldier among the Mercians. These taking with them about 800 stout and warlike men more from Deping, Lantoft, and Boston, (to whom also joined Morchar, lord of Brunne, with his strong and numerous family,) and being met by the sheriff of Lincoln, (a valiant and ancient soldier) with the Lincolnshire forces, they mustered together in Kesteven on St. Maurice's day, gave the Pagans battle, vanquished them with the slaughter of three of their chiefs, and a great number of common soldiers, and afterwards pursued them to their very camp, where finding a stout resistance, night at last parted them, and the earl drew back his army. But it seems the same night there returned to the Danish camp all the rest of the Princes of that nation, who dividing the country among them, had marched out to plunder. Their names are barbarous, and too many to be all particularly mentioned, but the chief leaders amongst them were Hinguar (Ivar) and Hubba, Godrum and Basseg, with others who then came, very seasonably, with great forces, a multitude of captives, and a great deal of spoil. Their return being known, the greatest part of the christians struck with terror fled away, whilst those that were left, early in the morning, after hearing divine service, and receiving the sacrament, being resolved to die for Christ, and in defence of their country, marched into the field against their enemies; but the earl perceiving his forces to be too much weakened, appointed fryer Toly with his five hundred men to fight in the right wing, because they were the strongest; and earl Morchar with those that followed him, as also the sheriff of Lincoln, making other five hundred men in the left wing, resolving himself, with his seneschals, to keep the main body, as being most convenient for assisting either wing if there were occasion. The Danes being now exasperated at the slaughter of their men, (having buried their three chiefs at a place then called Laundon, but afterwards from this burial called Trekyngham) two of their chiefs and eight counts marched out, whilst the rest guarded the camp and captives. Rut the Christians, because of the smallness of their number, drawing themselves up in one body, made with their shields a strong testudo against the force of their enemies' arrows, and kept off the horse with their pikes. And thus being well ordered by their commanders, they kept their ground all day; but night coming on, notwithstanding till then they had remained unbroken, and had withstood the force of their enemies' arrows, whose horses being tired began to flag; yet they very imprudently left an intire victory to the Pagans. For they feigning a flight on purpose, seemed to quit the field; which the Christians had no

sooner perceived, however their commanders forbid and opposed it, than they broke their ranks, and were all dispersed through the plain without any order or command. So that the Pagans returning like lions upon a flock of sheep, made a most prodigious slaughter amongst them; whilst the stout count Algar and fryer Toly, with some soldiers, getting upon a rising ground, and being drawn up into a round body, did for a long time endure their insults, till at last the said earl and other captains, seeing the stoutest men of their small army slain, got upon the thickest heaps of the Christians' dead bodies, and being resolved to sell their lives as dear as they could, after having received many wounds died honourably in the field. There now only remained a few young men of Sutton and Gedeney: but these flinging away their arms, fled into a neighbouring wood, and by that means escaping came the night following to the monastery of Croyland, where they related the slaughter of the Christians, and the loss of their whole company: which when they had told at the church door with great lamentations, the Abbot and the Monks, being extremely confounded at this ill news, resolved to keep with them only the elder Monks, and some few small children to provoke compassion, and so sent away all the younger men, together with the reliques, jewels, and charters of their Monastery, by boat to the wood of Ancaryg, adjoining to their Island; where they staid with one Toret, an anchorite four days, being thirty in number, whereof ten were priests. But the Abbot with the rest of his brethren, (after they had hid the rest of the plate, with the rich table of the altar) expecting nothing less than to be made a sacrifice to the fury of the enemy, put on their sacred vestments, said mass and communicated, which they had scarce finished when the Pagans breaking into the church, slew Abbot Theodore at the altar, who perished by the hands of their chief Osketule. After which they proceeded to dispatch the rest, which they did in so butcherly a manner, that there was not of old or young any that escaped, except one boy of about ten years old, who (being intended for a Monk) was saved by count Sidroc the younger, who stripped him of his habit, put on him a Danish coat, and ordered him to follow him wherever he went. An incidental circumstance marks the savage character of the Danish Chieftain, more effectually than could be done by a long description. Count Sidroc cautioned this little boy to *keep out of the way of Hubba*. When they had made an end of the slaughter, they broke open the tombs of St. Guthlac, and the princes there buried; but finding a more inconsiderable plunder than they expected, they set the church on fire, and burnt the dead bodies that were in it together."

85.—page 72. '*To Kenwith's neighbouring Castle.*'

Kenwith, to which Oddune retreated, was situated at the mouth of the river Taw, in Devonshire, but of which (Camden says) no vestige at present remains. The Saxon castles generally consisted of two parts, a bass-court, and a keep or dungeon. The bass-court was a piece of ground, sometimes about an acre in extent, surrounded by a high and thick stone wall, with a garretted parapet upon the top, from whence the garrison discharged their weapons on the assailants. This wall had also many small windows or rather slits in it, very narrow in proportion to their height, through which they shot their arrows. The lodgings for the officers and soldiers were built in the area, and along the inside of the

wall. At one end of the bass-court, was a round mount, sometimes artificial, sometimes natural, on which the keep or dungeon stood, which was a circular, stone building, with thick and high walls. From the top of this building, which was flat, the garrison had an extensive prospect of the surrounding country, being able by that means to discover the approaches of their enemies; from thence also the chief defence was made. The body of the keep, which sometimes consisted of several stories, contained the lodgings of the commander of the castle; and in the bottom was the dungeon (from which the building took its name) under ground and without light. The Danish camps were circular, surrounded with ditches and ramparts, of which many still exist in Cornwall.

86.—page 72. '*A noble Thane.*'

Henry says, "Among the Saxons, society was divided into five classes; SLAVES, FREELAZINS; GEORLS, THANES, and PRINCES OF THE BLOOD. The lowest order of people among the Anglo-Saxons was slaves, who with their wives and children were the property of their masters. Besides those who were native Slaves, or Slaves by birth, others frequently fell into this wretched state, by various means; as, by an ill luck at play, by the fate of war, by forfeiting their freedom by their crimes, or by even contracting debts which they were unable to pay. These unhappy people, who were very numerous, formed an article both of internal and foreign trade. 'The exportation of Slaves from some parts of England continued to the time of the Norman conquest. The people of *Bristol* were much addicted to this ignominious branch of commerce; of which we have the following curious account, in the life of Wulfstan, bishop of Worcester, in the reign of William the first. 'There is a sea-port town called Bristol, opposite to Ireland, unto which its inhabitants make frequent voyages on account of trade. Wulfstan cured the people of this town of a most odious and inveterate custom, which they derived from their ancestors, of buying men and women in all parts of England, and exporting them to Ireland for the sake of gain. You might have seen, with sorrow, long ranks of both sexes, and of the greatest beauty tied together with ropes, and daily exposed to sale; nor were these men ashamed, oh horrible wickedness! to give up their nearest relations, nay their own children to slavery! Wulfstan knowing the obstinacy of these people, sometimes stayed two months amongst them, preaching every Lord's day; by which, in process of time, he made so great an impression on their minds, that they abandoned their wicked trade, and set an example to all the rest of England to do the same.' It was the sight of some English Slaves which was the occasion of Christianity being first preached among their countrymen. 'Pope Gregory the great, beholding some English youths exposed for sale in the market place at Rome, was so much struck with the beauty of their persons, that when he was told that they were named English (Anglos) and that they and their countrymen were not yet converted to Christianity, he broke out into this exclamation: 'How lamentable is it that the Prince of darkness should have such beautiful subjects, and that a nation so amiable in their bodies, should have none of the charms of divine grace in their souls. Their form is truly angelic, and they are fit to be the companions of the angels in heaven.'" In consequence of this, St. Augustine was sent to England, and succeeded in converting several

kings of the heptarchy, from which time the traffic of Slaves gradually declined, the bishops and clergy recommending the manumission of Slaves as a most charitable and meritorious action. The second class or rank of people was called *FRELAZINS*; who had been Slaves, but had either purchased, or by some other means obtained their liberty. The third class or rank of people in Britain were called *CEORLS*, who descended from a long race of Freemen, and constituted a middle class between the Labourers and Mechanics (who were generally Slaves, or descended from Slaves) on the one hand, and the Nobility on the other. They might go where they pleased, and pursue any way of life that was most agreeable to them; but so many of them applied to agriculture and farming the lands of the Nobility, that a *Ceorl* was the most common name for a husbandman. A *Ceorl* by possessing five hides of land, or if he applied to learning and obtained priests' orders, was considered as a Thane. When he applied to trade and made three voyages beyond sea, in a ship of his own, he was also advanced to the dignity of Thane, (a law of Alfred.) If a *Ceorl* also applied to arms, and acquitted himself so well as to obtain from his patron, either five hides of land or a gilt sword, helmet and breastplate, as the reward of his valour, he was likewise considered as a Thane. Thus the temple of honour stood open to the *Ceorls*, whether they applied themselves to agriculture, commerce, letters, or arms, which were then the only professions esteemed worthy of a Freeman. The fourth class was that of *Thanes* or *Nobles*. There were several orders of Nobility or *Thanes*, among the Anglo-Saxons, though it is difficult to mark at this time the precise distinction between them. There were however three orders of King's *Thanes*, who consisted of hereditary Nobility, who were attendants upon, and retainers of the King; the great ornaments of his court in time of peace, and the chief defence of his person in time of war. Of this class *Oddune* was an illustrious member. The fifth and last order consisted of those who were related to the Royal Family, and were called *Princes of the blood*.

St. Augustine having first landed on the Isle of Thanet, in Kent, it is pretended (like another Ireland) that no venomous creature will live there, in compliment to so holy a visitant.

87—page 74. *'Passed to their reeden beds.'*

The ancient Britons slept on skins, and lay on the floor of their apartments. Skins among the Anglo-Saxons, were changed for rushes; which formed the beds of many of the lower orders of Welsh to the last century: the Highlanders, for the most part sleep on them at present. For many ages the beds of the French and Italians were constantly composed of straw, and amongst the Anglo-Saxons this was considered as a kind of luxury, and confined to gentry only, the common people uniformly lying on rushes. Some ingenious man, "of unrecorded name," many years afterward invented the bedstead, or the art of supporting the bed on four pedestals, but this improvement is said to have been entirely unknown to our Saxon forefathers. Straw was used in the royal chamber of England as late as the conclusion of the thirteenth century; and it was the office of the *Chamberlain* in the court of the Welsh Kings, "To provide clean straw or rushes for the royal bed."

88.—page 74. '*Tossed on the hostile spear.*'

"The Danes, (*Wallingford* says,) 'like inhuman savages destroyed all before them with fire and sword, involving cities, towns, and villages in devouring flames, and slaying all with their battle-axes who attempted to escape from their burning houses. The tears, cries and lamentations of men, women and children, made no impression on their unrelenting hearts: even the most tempting bribes, and the humblest offers of becoming their slaves had no effect. All the towns through which they passed, exhibited the most deplorable scenes of misery and desolation; venerable matrons and old men lying with their throats cut before their own doors, and the streets covered with the bodies of their children, without legs, heads, or arms."

It was a common sport, at this time for the Danes to seize the Saxon infants from the arms of their mothers, when tossing them up in the air they showed their dexterity by catching them on the point of their spears. One Danish Chieftain who refused this sport to his followers acquired the honourable epithet of "Child preserver."

89.—page 76. '*By the clean hearth.*'

The hearth of the Anglo-Saxons was always placed in the centre of the room, and it can hardly be supposed that the Saxons enjoyed the benefit of a *chimney*, when it was unknown to the Romans in the zenith of their luxury; the smoke, however, from wood, is less unpleasant and detrimental to health, than the sulphureous effluvia from coal.

The conveniences of life, at this time were little understood or esteemed. Houses amongst the Anglo-Saxons were almost universally built of wood, whilst their coverings were generally long reeds, which in latter ages were exchanged for straw. The covering of the houses even in London was straw, till within these three centuries.

Windows were commonly formed of paper, (in the Anglo-Saxon time), or linen, or lattices of wood: and even in Cathedrals, glass was almost unknown. The fine Cathedral of Hexham (the ruins of which still exist) was without glass windows at its first erection, the latter end of the seventh century, although William of Malmesbury thus describes it. "How large and strong were the subterraneous buildings, constructed of the finest polished stones. How magnificent the superstructure, with its lofty roof, supported by many pillars; its long and high walls; its sublime towers, and winding stairs. In one word there is no church, on this side the Alps, so great and beautiful."

The Monastery of Were-mouth was erected 674, by Benedict Biscop, who procured artificers from France, with Glass-makers, whom he obtained to glaze the windows of his Church and Monastery, (an art at that time unknown in England.) These artificers instructed the English in the art of making glass for windows, lamps, and drinking vessels. And when Bishop Wilfred repaired York Cathedral, "he restored the roof." (*William of Malmesbury* says,) "and covered it with sheets of lead, white-washed the walls with lime, and put glass into the windows; some of which had before admitted the light through fine linen cloths, and others through lattices."

It appears from the History of the Gweder Family, that a House of Sir John Wynn's, in North Wales, received its discriminating name, as it is

supposed, from being the first house, in those parts, which exhibited the marvellous improvement of Glass Windows. (Henry 8th's reign.)

90.—page 77. *'I will relieve thy wants.'*

The Anglo-Saxons (says Sir John Spelman) were remarkable for their hospitality: the Anglo-Saxon clergy were commanded by the canons of the church to practise hospitality themselves, and to recommend the practice of it very frequently and earnestly to the people. The English Kings spent a considerable portion of their revenues in entertaining strangers, and their own nobility and clergy; particularly at the three great festivals, of Christmas, Easter and Whitsuntide. The English Nobility, in imitation of their Princes, consumed the greatest part of their large estates in a rude abundant kind of hospitality, of which all who thought proper were welcome to partake; while the inferior classes of society, to the extent of their power, were always courteous to strangers.

91.—page 77. *'Some savage beast.'*

The forests of Britain, at this period, contained a great many wolves, wild boars, and beasts, besides wild bulls and cows, which were all milk white, with thick hanging manes, like lions, and almost as fierce and savage as they. The wild boar remained in England many years after the wolf was extirpated; and the bear was common here down even to the Conquest. "When any one," says the penitentials of Egbert, strikes a wild beast with an arrow, and it escapes and is found dead three days afterwards; if a hound, a wolf, a fox, or a bear, or any other wild beast hath begun to feed upon it, let no Christian touch it." The town of Norwich, says the Dooms-day book, furnished annually one bear to the King, and six dogs for baiting it.

92.—page 78. *'For whom no bells hath tolled.'*

Bells were introduced into Britain as early as the seventh century, and were ever afterwards considered as a necessary appendage to every parish church. The passing bell was anciently rung for two purposes, one to bespeak the prayers of all good christians for a soul just departing; the other to drive away the evil spirits who were supposed to be near the house and ready to seize their prey, or at least to molest and terrify the soul in its passage: but by the sound of the bell, they were kept aloof. Hence, perhaps, exclusive of the additional labour, was the high price demanded for tolling the greatest bell of the church; for, that being louder, the evil spirit must go further off, to be clear of its sound. Bells, in the times of popery, were regularly baptized, anointed, christened and exorcised by the Bishop. Some vestiges of this custom may be yet traced in Tom of Lincoln, and great Tom, ("The mighty Tom") at Christ-Church in Oxford.

93.—page 80. *'Have raised its deep foundations.'*

Glastonbury Abbey, now destroyed by the Danes, had been rebuilt by Ina, at the beginning of the eighth Century.

"Ina (William of Malmesbury says,) had reigned 37 years, when his Queen Ethelburga urged him, without effect, to renounce his Crown and retire from the world into some religious establishment. Soon after

Ethelburga presided with the King at a great feast, and then set off, with her royal Consort, on a journey; but the Queen inventing some pretence for returning, the King complied, when he was astonished to find his splendid Hall, polluted with filth and rubbish, and a swinish litter on his couch. Turning to the Queen, for an explanation, she addressed him thus:—

“Where is the merriment, the splendor, the luxury, the flattery of yesterday? are they not all vapours, transient as the winds? As transitory are we also who enjoyed them! Are we not like a river hurrying to the dark ocean of illimitable time? Behold the disgusting spectacle of dissolving viands, and in their loathsome relics, contemplate what our pampered bodies must become. Let us then contemplate those divine objects which are more suitable to the condition we approach.”

This incident and address so impressed the mind of Ina, that he resigned his Crown to the next Heir, and set off on a Pilgrimage to Rome.” *William of Malmesbury.*

94.—page 81. ‘*Saint Alban.*’

St. Alban, (*Newcome* says,) at this period, was held in higher estimation than any other Saint, from having been the Proto-Martyr of England; and his relics were incessantly resorted to, from the prodigious number of cures which they were supposed to effect.

After Offa, King of Mercia, had treacherously murdered the young King of East Angli, (as mentioned in a subsequent note,) he began to feel the never-dying worm of a guilty conscience, when communicating his intolerable burden to his Bishops and Counsellors, Humbert and Unwona, they persuaded him, as an effectual expurgation of his crime, to erect an Abbey over the spot where St. Alban had suffered martyrdom. To this the King immediately assented, but the great difficulty lay in ascertaining the precise place where St. Alban had suffered; and, what was of still more consequence, where the Saint was interred; for to erect a Church to the Martyr, without possessing his remains, appeared inconsistent even in that age. It is to be remarked, that St. Alban had suffered about 500 years before, and though a small Church had been erected to the memory of the Saint soon after, yet so effectually had the Pagan Saxons destroyed this Church, that it was only known to have been built in the Roman Town of Verulam, (the site of the present Town of St. Alban,) but *where* was uncertain, for not a vestige of the Church remained.

‘Having obtained the consent of the King to erect this new Abbey, the zealous Bishops were too good logicians to be frustrated by surmountable difficulties, as they entertained no doubt of finding the precise body of St. Alban, either by their own sagacity, or by the aid of a miracle. On the day fixed upon, (*Mat. Paris* says) the King, with his Bishops, in the neighbourhood of Verulam, set about the arduous task of finding the very body of St. Alban. They entered on their search with prayer, fasting, and alms, when they struck the ground every where to hit the spot of burial. They had not continued the search long, when, the historian says, a light from Heaven was vouchsafed to assist the discovery, for a ray of fire stood over the place of interment, like the star that conducted the Magi to find the Holy Jesus at Bethlehem. The ground was opened, and in the presence of Offa, the body of St. Alban was found, deposited together with some relics in a coffin of wood. Offa was so delighted at the discovery,

that he placed a circle of gold round the bare skull of the Saint, with an inscription signifying his name and title. This transaction happened 507 years after the suffering of St. Alban, and was a prelude to the erection of the fine Abbey to his memory. To make his pardon also quite sure, he undertook a pilgrimage to Rome.

On one memorable occasion the Abbey was in danger of losing this its greatest treasure, for tidings arrived that the destructive Danes were taking their devastating course toward St. Alban's. The Abbot Elfric, and his Clergy, were immediately overwhelmed with consternation, less, as it appears, from the apprehended destruction of their Abbey, than from the fear of losing their holy relics. In this dilemma, Elfric, with the privy of a few, caused the most valuable effects of the Monastery, and what was more esteemed than all, the bones of St. Alban, to be placed in a secret hole in the wall, close under the altar of St. Nicholas. This was a precaution which would have struck any ordinary mind; the Abbot's ingenuity, however, appears by the following device: After he had thus deposited the bones of St. Alban, he determined on sending *another set* of the Saint's bones to the more secure Monastery of Ely, and humbly to request that as the destruction of St. Alban's Abbey was soon expected from the Danes, they would be pleased to receive, as a temporary deposit, the precious bones of their chief Saint. By this contrivance, if the Pagans utterly rased their own Abbey, St. Alban's bones would still be safe in a distant Monastery; and if their Abbey should not be utterly destroyed, and any accident should happen to the fictitious Saint, the real one might triumphantly be produced.

The Monks of Ely consented to accept the relics on the conditions proposed, when Elfric sent the *false* relics, inclosed in a very rich chest, and to give the affair a more plausible appearance, he added a very rough shagged old coat, with a declaration, that this was the very coat which was usually worn by Amphitalus, the Master of Alban.

The accuracy of Abbot Elfric's profound reasoning soon became manifest. The Danes rolled the tide of destruction in another direction, when the Monks of St. Alban duly claimed the restitution of their relics. The Monks of Ely, however, were very well satisfied with their inestimable treasure, and sending back a saucy answer refused to restore them. The true owners pleaded the sanctity of their engagement, and threatened to inform, not only the King, but the Pope of their breach of faith and religion. The Monks of Ely now began to apprehend danger, and there being a great difference of opinion, a serious schism happened in the Monastery. The greater part, however, thought the bones of St. Alban as valuable to themselves as to their late owners, and resolved to keep them, although, from the influence of fear, they deemed it prudent to return some *fictitious* bones instead of those of the *true* St. Alban. For this purpose, with all imaginable care they opened the bottom of the chest, drew out the imaginary treasure, and substituted other vulgar bones in its stead. The relics having safely arrived at St. Albans, Elfric brought forth the *genuine* bones of their revered Proto-martyr, to the unspeakable confusion of the good Monks of Ely, who were now permitted to retain, without molestation, the holy relics of which they had so ingeniously possessed themselves."

Numerous instances of the uncertainty of relics, with the deception of

the Clergy, and the sottish credulity of the Laity, may be found in "Patrick's Reflections on the Roman Church." These were some of the weapons with which Luther so successfully assailed the Romish Clergy.

95.—page 82. '*Brystoe*.'

The ancient spelling of *Bristol* varies like that of London. Bristol was one of the 33 Saxon Cities, thus enumerated by *Nennius*, who wrote his 'History of the Britons,' between the eighth and tenth century, as under. (Excluding their Saxon names.)

1 York	19 Bristol, (Cair Bristoe)
2 Canterbury	20 Meivod. Qr.
3 Anglesea	21 Manchester (Cair Maniguid)
4 Cair Guorthegern. Qr.	22 Chester
5 Carnarvon	23 Winchester, or Caerwent in Menmouthshire
6 Worcester	24 Colchester, or St. Colon, Corn- wall
7 Silchester	25 London, (Cair Londein)
8 Norwich or Winwick	26 Warren, or Woran, Pembroke- shire
9 Caermarthen	27 Leicester
10 Porchester	28 Drayton. Qr.
11 Carleon upon Usk	29 Pevensey (Sussex)
12 Verulam	30 Teyn-Garie, in Devonshire
13 Cattherick	31 Wroxeter, in Shropshire
14 Cirencester	32 Camalet, in Somersetshire
15 Gloucester	33 Lincoln.
16 Carlisle	
17 Grantchester, now Cambridge	
18 Doncaster	

'Churches and Cities have diseases,—and have like death that we have.'

96.—page 82. '*Sigbert his sword*.'

The Saxon sword was much larger than that used by the Danes; often three feet in length, and without curvature.

The Saxon Infantry were not uniformly equipped. Some were provided with spears, others with axes, others with bows and arrows, and not a few with clubs, besides swords, which were common to them all. Their shields had sharp spikes, in the centre, with which they wounded their enemies while they defended themselves. The Cavalry were armed with long spears, and swords: their shields also were larger, whilst they wore helmets, and were further defended by Cuirasses or coats of mail.

97.—page 87. '*Ethelney*.'

Ethelney was surrounded by a swamp or marsh, and not to be approached but by one narrow passage. It was situated at the confluence of the Thone and Parret, a few miles from Taunton.

98.—page 88. '*Murderers of Edmund*.'

In the spring of 870. (*Strutt* says,) The Danes, on their way to East Anglia, the territories of Edmund, ranged along the eastern coast till they came to Thetford. This was a bloody and destructive march, for the

merciless Danes laid the country waste with fire and sword wherever they came; towns and cities they rased to the ground, and miserably butchered the inhabitants, sparing neither young nor old. The Monasteries of Bradney, Croyland and Peterborough, together with the Nun's house, in the Isle of Ely, were all totally destroyed. Edmund used all his endeavours to stop the course of these invaders; who, like a torrent, overwhelmed his dominions with ruin. Having collected all his forces, he followed them to Thetford, but Edmund and his army were overthrown, and the King narrowly escaped. At last however, he reached the Castle of Framingham, where he fortified himself in the best manner he could. But he had not long resided there, when the Danes learned whither he had retired, came and laid siege to the castle, and at last, after an obstinate resistance the Castle was taken and he himself made prisoner. No sooner had they got possession of his person than they began, in the most cruel manner, to inflict severe tortures upon him, beating him with scourges, and lancing his flesh with their daggers. When they were tired of tormenting him, they bound him to a tree and shot him to death with their arrows.

99.—page 88. '*Caliburno.*'

Caliburno was the name of the British King Arthur's sword. This sword was given by Richard the First, to the King of Sicily, on his return from Palestine.

100.—page 90. '*Who would not him to serve.*'

Alfred the Great (like the Mussulmen at the name of Allah) is never mentioned without a blessing. Stow and Granger thus depict his character.

"The victorious Prince, the studious provider for widows, orphans, and poor people; most perfect in Saxon poetry, most liberall endued with wisdom, fortitude, justice and temperance; the most patient bearer of sickness, wherewith he was daily vexed; a most discrete searcher of truth, and a most vigilant and devout Prince in the service of God."—S.

"The Title of *Great* which has been lavished on the destroyers and plunderers of mankind, was never more deservedly given than to Alfred who had in his character a happy mixture of every great and good quality that could dignify or adorn a Prince. Having rescued his country from slavery, he enacted excellent laws, built a fleet, restored learning, and laid the foundation of the English Constitution."—G.

Ethelwerd in his Chronicle, thus records the death of Alfred. 'In the year 900, King Alfred departed out of this world, that immoveable pillar of the Western Saxons; that man—full of justice; bold in arms; learned in speech; and above all other things imbued with divine instructions. He had translated into his own language, out of latin, unnumbered volumes of so varied a nature, and so excellently, that the Book of *Boethius*, seemed, as it were, brought to life again.'

101.—page 91. '*Minstrel in the court who dwells.*'

(Wallice says,) There were twenty-four great officers in the Court of the Kings of Wales, sixteen belonging to the King, and eight belonging to the Queen. The King's officers were the following: 1. The *Mayor of the Palace*, who was also General of the Army. 2. The *Priest of the*

Household, who sat at the royal table to bless the meat, and chant the Lord's prayer. 8. The *Steward*, one of whose perquisites was the following: "As much of every cask of plain ale shall belong to the steward, of the household, as he can reach with his middle finger dipped into it, and as much of every cask of ale with spices, as he can reach with the second joint of his middle finger, and as much of every cask of mead as he can reach with the first joint of the same finger." 4. The *Master of the Hawks*, who was permitted to sit at the King's table, but who entered into a stipulation that he would drink no more than three times, lest he should become intoxicated and neglect his birds. 5. The *Judge of the Household*, the most indispensable of whose qualifications were a learned education and a long beard: he presided at the contests of the poets and musicians which were frequently held before the King. 6. The *Master of the Horse*. 7. The *Chamberlain*, one of whose obligations was to provide clean straw and rushes for the King's bed. 8. The *Chief Musician or Bard*. This officer was always very highly esteemed by the Welsh Kings. He sat at the King's table next to the Mayor of the Palace. At the time he was invested with his office, the King presented him with a harp, and the Queen with a gold ring, both which he was obliged to keep as long as he lived. It was his duty to sing and play before the King. 1st. the praises of God, 2nd. the praises of the King, 3rd. a subject of his own choice. He attended the army to battle, and before an engagement, sang and played a particular song called the British Empire. 9. The *Silentiary*. It was the duty of this officer to command silence in the hall when the King sat down to table; and when any quarrelling or improper noise arose, he immediately quashed it by striking the pillar with his rod. 10. The *Master of the Huntsmen*, who whenever he gave his oath was not required to swear, in the way that others did, but always by his horse and his dogs. 11. The *Mead Maker*. 12. The *Physician*, whose fee for curing slight wounds was, all the garments that had been stained with blood: for fractured skulls or broken legs or arms, he was entitled in addition to 180 pence. 13. The *Butler*. 14. The *Porter*, who was gentleman-usher to the King, and who was entitled, at each of the great festivals, to three horns-full of a certain liquor called the twelve apostles. 15. The *Master Cook*; and 16. The *Master of the Lights*. Besides these sixteen officers, and the eight who were attached to the Queen, there were eleven others employed in the King's household, one of whom was a young gentleman, whose duty it was to sit on the floor, with his back to the fire, and hold the King's feet in his bosom all the time he sat at table, to keep them comfortably warm. One of the offices of the Bard, before-named, was rather singular, as may be collected from the following ordinance: "The Royal Bard shall attend the King's domestics when they go out to plunder the English, they shall sing and play before them, for their encouragement. If they meet with resistance, and a battle ensue, he shall sing the song called, *the Old English Monarchy*." These predatory excursions were common to the people of both countries, and from the lax morality of the age, were deemed praiseworthy rather than diareputable."

102.—page 96. '*Those are the Danes!*'

In the reign of Charlemagne, the Danes had become troublesome to the Franks. On their first arrival, this Monarch was at dinner, in the City

of Narbonne: when their ships came in sight; by the construction of their vessels, and the agility of their mariners, he knew that they were not merchants. Rising from the table he went to the eastern window of the mansion to contemplate them. The tears bedewed his cheek as he gazed. He had heard of their inhuman excesses, and, anticipating future miseries he exclaimed, "I fear not that they can injure me, but I weep that these Pirates should dare in my life-time to approach my coast. I behold the miseries they will bring on my posterity."

These fears in a subsequent age were abundantly realized, as the Danes ravaged most of the shores of France, indiscriminately slaughtering the inhabitants.

103.—page 97. '*Soft as the song of Brag.*'

Brag, among the Scandinavians, was the god of eloquence; but Poetry in rhyme, was introduced into the North by Odin.

Odin, introduced the method of composing verses in numbers, and such rhymes as are common in the Teutonic dialect, differing, in this point from all other languages in the world, the last words, (as the *Edda* describes it) answering to one another exactly in sound; and this he is said to have done in such pleasing calences, that mixing them in common discourse he wonderfully allured the hearers, and is reputed the inventor of Poetry, and the founder of that Tribe called *Schalders* or *Scalds*.

104.—page 101. '*Offer him battle.*'

According to the *Edda*, it was an established law of the Danes, that one who wished to acquire the character of a brave man, should always attack two enemies; stand firm and receive the attack of three; retire only one pace from four; and fly from no fewer than five. Notwithstanding the general ferocity of the Danes, on some occasions they displayed striking instances of generosity. When a Danish Prince had attained his eighteenth or twentieth year, he commonly requested of his father a small fleet, completely fitted out, in order to achieve with his followers some adventure that might be productive of glory and spoil. The father, applauding such an inclination in his son, gave him ships, and required of him an engagement that he would not return, unless adorned with trophies, and loaded with plunder. That nation became the first object of their resentment from whom they had received any injury, and frequently their principal aim was to make reprisals on some province which served for the retreat of other Corsairs. If the fleets of two different nations met by chance in their voyage, they never missed such an occasion for fighting. The vanquished party was commonly put to death, though sometimes the conquerors were contented to make them slaves; and often by a singular strain of generosity, which the love of glory was able to produce in minds in other respects so distinguished for cruelty, if the enemy that fell in their way had fewer ships than themselves, they set aside part of their own vessels, and so engaged upon equal terms, that the victory might not be attributed to superiority of number. Sometimes the chiefs resolved upon deciding it by single combat: in this case they lauded upon the nearest shore: if one of them happened to be disarmed or thrown down, he frequently refused to receive quarter, and was killed on the spot: but if he defended himself gallantly, the victor frequently granted him his life, de-

manded his friendship, adopted him for a kind of foster-brother, and they mutually swore to preserve an eternal friendship. In token of this alliance, the two heroes sometimes made incisions in their hands and arms, and smeared their weapons with their blood, or mixing it with their cups, each of them covering his head with a sod, drank of it, swearing that the death of the first of them who died in battle should not pass unrevengeed by the survivor. Harce and Grymer were two princes of the North, who quarrelling, after a dreadful battle, the former was subdued. Grymer instead of putting his opponent to death, addressed him in the following words. "The king my father-in-law has lost his life, and thy son is slain; let our mutual loss be deemed equal, and let the death of Grunder atone and compensate for that of Eric. For thee, oh king! accept at my hand both life and peace. Thou hast signalized thyself in combat, keep therefore thy mighty ships and thy Bearmian kingdom."

105.—page 101. '*Odin, Thor, and Freya.*'

Freya was the wife of Odin, and Thor the bravest of their sons. These three formed a supreme council of the gods. Independently of these, there were many other deities, of whom the following were the most famous: Niord, the god of the seas; Balder, the god of light; Tyr, the god of champions; Helmdal, the door-keeper of the gods; and Lok, by some reckoned a god, although he was the pest of both gods and men.

106.—page 102. '*By this sword.*'

To swear by their sword was common among the Danes.

107.—page 103. '*A string of pearls.*'

Alfred having learned that the Christians of St. Thomas, "residing in India, on the coast of Coromandel, were in destitute circumstances, conceived the bold design of transmitting to them succours, and selected, as a suitable agent, one Sighelm, a Monk. Alfred, we learn from *Asserius*, was in the habit of corresponding with Abel, Patriarch of Jerusalem, from whom it is probable that the information was derived. *William of Malsbury* thus describes the circumstance: "Sighelm was sent beyond sea, with the King's charity to the Christians of St. Thomas, in India, and executed that commission with wonderful good fortune; which is still the subject of universal admiration: for he really penetrated into India, (generally supposed from *Alexandria, down the Red Sea,*) and returning, from thence, brought with him jewels of a new kind, with which that country very much abounds." It is probable that a secondary motive with Alfred might have been, to increase his Geographical knowledge. The solicitude which Alfred discovered to increase this branch of knowledge, is shown by a manuscript of his, a copy of which is brought down to the present times, being the description of the north of Europe, taken down by the King himself from the mouth of a Norwegian Nobleman, who had penetrated farther north than any other person at that time. A translation of this work from the Saxon, has been given by the Hon. Daines Barrington, and Mr. Turner. In Malsbury's time, the Cathedral of Sherborne had many of the precious stones thus obtained by Alfred from India, and which may have arisen from the circumstance of Sighelm, the

Ecclesiastic, who so successfully performed this extraordinary mission, having been made by Alfred, Bishop of Sherborne.

108.—page 106. *'Are bound to Cambria.'*

In these times, many Saxons escaped into Wales, from the fury of the Danes.

109.—page 106. *'The wasters of all lands.'*

Next to England, (*Turner* says,) no country suffered more from the Northmen, or Normans, as they were commonly called, than France. The anticipation of Charlemagne, (see note page 143,) was fully realized. In the year 843, Prince Biorn was set out with Hastings, as his military tutor, to commence his piratical education. "They entered the Loire in June, and assaulted Nantz; the walls were scaled or beaten down. A contemporary states that the Bishop, the Clergy, Monks, and inhabitants, fled into the largest church in the city. The Pagans beat in the windows, and at last forced the doors, and then rushed in upon the helpless multitude. They slaughtered till they were weary. The few who survived were dragged to their ships, and the narrator of this event, who beheld the scene, describes the infants as still hanging to the breasts of their dead mothers, and the altars flowing with human blood.

Two years afterward, Regner Lodbrog invaded France. He began by ravaging the adjacent Isles, and experiencing no resistance, he entered the Seine, with 120 ships filled with his followers. They first attacked Rouen, and finding the inhabitants struck with dread and consternation, and fleeing at their approach, Regner became emboldened, and had the hardihood to sail up the river, plundering and slaughtering as he advanced. Regner and his army, at length reached Paris, destroyed the Monastery of St. Germain, and was prevented alone from plundering and burning the city by a great bribe from the French King.

110.—page 107. *'Tydal and Doffran.'*

Two lofty hills in Norway. It was on the former of these hills that several thousand Swedish soldiers were frozen to death. It had been the intention of the Swedes to besiege Drontheim, but Budde the Danish General, had made such dispositions, that this design was impracticable; they therefore cantoned themselves amongst the peasants in the neighbourhood till the beginning of the year 1710, when intelligence arrived of the unexpected death of Charles the XIIth before Frederickshall; and the Swedes understanding that the whole Danish army was in full march against them, they determined on a precipitate retreat; this could only be accomplished by marching over the lofty and extensive hill of Tydal; hazardous in the extreme, and against which the Norwegians themselves had enacted a law restricting all persons from travelling that way, except between the months of May and August, but the present being a desperate case, the Swedes determined upon making the attempt. They set forward, when having reached the summit of the mountain, they were overtaken by a storm of snow, accompanied by intense cold, which froze almost the whole of them to death. A company of two hundred Norwegian sledgesmen, which followed to observe their retreat, found the Swedes on the mountain; some sitting, some lying, and some in a posture of prayer, but

all frozen to death. How great their distress must have been may be judged by their cutting their muskets to pieces, in order to burn what little fuel might be obtained from them. Of the whole body, consisting of ten thousand men, not more than two thousand five hundred, or according to others, five hundred escaped to their own country.

111.—page 107. '*And the loud-bellowing tide impassable.*'

A very common accident in the mountainous parts of the North. Persons of rank commonly travel through these districts, accompanied by men prepared with implements for rectifying any bridge which may have been injured by the torrents. This disappointment, to the poor traveller, often proves fatal, as it is no easy undertaking to return, it may be, thirty or forty miles, over bleak hills, covered with snow and ice, to find another passage, which may still be liable to the same accident. Some of the Norway passes are dangerous, beyond the conception of most travellers. According to *Pontoppidan*, there is a road called the Galleries, under the mountain Filefield, (the only way between two districts in Norway,) which to a stranger appears inaccessible, and which is never passed but with horror by the native traveller. It is the way between two stupendous mountains of granite; immense fragments of which have fallen, at different periods, into the stream below, which in some seasons is swelled into a foaming torrent, forcing its way over the mighty crags which obstruct its course. A succession of bridges, with great labour, have been placed from rock to rock through the valley, and a winding road scooped out of the almost perpendicular side of the mountains adjoining; in many places forming an angle of 45 degrees, and so narrow as to admit one man alone and his horse at the same time. If two should happen to meet in this pass, there is no alternative but one of the men clinging as near the rock as possible, and after blinding his horse with a cloth, forcing him over the precipice.

112.—page 107. '*The Caledonian host.*'

Till the union of the two crowns, a rooted animosity subsisted between the English and Scotch; from the earliest times violating each others boundaries, and marking their different inroads with the most savage instances of cruelty. For many centuries a large track, bordering on the two countries, remained wholly uncultivated and nearly uninhabited, the few who dwelt there being outlawed and living by murder and depredation: but these evils were inconsiderable compared with the destructive wars carried on by the respective Monarchs, who were actuated by no other principles than plunder and revenge. The wars of John and Alexander were attended with more brutal instances of massacre than are to be met with in the annals of the Caribbees. No one can read, without shuddering, of the battle of Allerton, in the reign of Stephen, when David, with a mighty slaughter was overthrown, after laying waste with fire and sword the counties of Northumberland and Durham. William King of Scotland, in one of his excursions, was taken prisoner after beholding an immense slaughter of his subjects. Edward the first slew sixty thousand Scotch at the battle of Falkirk, and Edward the third slew nearly as many at Hally-down-hill. It would be afflicting to humanity to recite the different recorded contests which have taken place between the English and Scotch, during the period of the Romans, Britons, Saxons, and down

nearly to the time when the happy union of the two crowns was established.

113.—page 107. '*Rollo the Norman.*'

In the year 876, Rollo, with a large fleet, appeared on the coast of England, but such were the preparations which Alfred made to resist him, that, fearing to land, he sailed to the coast of France, and succeeded in conquering the province of Normandy, which some years afterwards was regularly ceded, by the King of France, to him and his posterity. William the first of England was a descendant of this Rollo. *Speed* says: "In the year eight hundred and seventy-six, Rollo, a Nobleman of Denmark, with a great army entered into England, with no less spoile and destruction than other of those Danes before him had done, with whom King Alfred met and gave him so hot a welcome, that he liked not greatly his entertainment."

114.—page 110. '*They there a Fortress reared.*'

A Fort was built in the wood, (*Strutt* says) and the people of Somersetshire, Wiltshire and Hampshire, now receiving information that their King was living, gathered themselves together, and being joined by a great number of those that fled, in the beginning of the year, into foreign parts, and now were returned, they proceeded to Selwood, and at a place called Egbrythstone, were met by Alfred, whom they received with the greatest demonstrations of joy, as one risen from the dead.

115.—page 117. '*Far through the tangled trees.*'

Grafton quaintly says, "King Alured beying thus ouercome with a multitude of enemies, did lead an uncerteyne, troublesome and vnquit lyfe, and hauing very fewe folkes about him would walke about in the wood cuntrye of Somersetshire, and had skant to liue withall."

It appears from *Cæsar's Commentaries*, that Britain was little else than one continuous forest. In Alfred's day, woods were extensive and general, particularly in Somersetshire. The Druidical Temple, Staunton Drew, was imbossomed in trees. *Collinson* says that Dundry Hill derives its name from two Gothic words, signifying, '*A Hill of Oaks.*'

115.—page 134. '*Valkyries.*'

Valkyries were the female ministers of Odin, who selected those who were to die in battle. They also attended the heroes in the halls of Valhalla. The names of two of them were Hrista and Mista.

116.—page 142. '*Thou must not wage the war.*'

The ministers of religion among the Anglo Saxons, were exempted from military services, and forbidden the use of arms, that they might not be diverted from a constant attention to the duties of their sacred functions. The Pagans as well as the Christians admitted the inconsistency of their ministers of religion bearing arms. The Pagan Northumbrians imagined their high-priest Coifi was insane when they beheld him riding on a horse with a spear in his hand.

117.—page 142. '*To the high port which wisdom gives her sons.*'

No object appears to have been more at heart with Alfred, than

the cultivation of Learning, which in this country was almost unknown. The Danes had destroyed all the Monasteries, (the Universities of those days) massacred the religious, and burnt their Books, so that the materials for study, as well as masters capable of instructing were almost unattainable objects. Alfred observes, in the preface to his translation of Gregory's Pastorals, that "from the Humber to the Thames, there was not a Priest that understood the liturgy in his mother tongue; and, that from the Thames to the sea, there was not one that knew how to translate the easiest piece of latin!" To remedy this great evil, he collected at court the few Englishmen who had obtained reputation for learning, and at the same time invited similar characters from the continent. With these men he was in the habit of conversing familiarly and of devising the most efficient means for illuminating his subjects. *Asserius*, his friend and biographer, has transmitted the names of these luminaries; Plegmund, Wulfsig, Wenefrid, Dunwolf, Athelstan, Welwulf, the famous St. Neot, with Grimbald, and John Scotus.

With the assistance of these men Alfred formed the project for selecting and endowing some one particular place as a general seminary of learning. The spot he pitched upon was Oxford, from its inland situation, as secure from the Danes, as any place could be, and not more than ten miles distant from his own court at Wantage. It appears from the evidence of *Gildas*, that Oxford was known as a place of education, antecedent to the times of the Saxons, but Alfred may fairly be considered as the founder, from having formed it into a Royal establishment, and placed therein, public instructors or professors, who taught without receiving any consideration from the public. Alfred founded, in Oxford, three Halls, or Colleges; one for the science of Grammar; one for Philosophy, and one for Theology; and at the same time nominated twenty-six Scholars to each hall with suitable maintenance; and accompanied with proper regulations. *Speed* states (from the Annals of Wilton Monast :) that Alfred himself was in the habit of attending the Oxford Lectures. It was the incorporation of these three halls into one college that obtained for the place the name of *University*, a designation at that time unknown in Europe.

Camden says that the first Hall was situated at the end of High Street for Grammarians, and was called Little University Hall; that the second stood in School Street, for Philosophy, and was stiled Less University Hall, and that the third was in High Street, more to the west than the first; that it was appropriated to Divinity, and called, Great University Hall, now University College.

An origin to Oxford so early and honourable, might be supposed sufficient to satisfy any rational ambition, but the claims of the rival Universities, to a superior antiquity, have more than once amused the world with their absurdity.

When Queen Elizabeth visited Cambridge, 1564, the public orator complimented *his* University with possessing a higher antiquity than Oxford. Upon the Queen's visiting Oxford soon afterward, the assumption of Cambridge was indignantly repelled. This declaration at once threw down the gauntlet; doughty champions arranged themselves on either side, and every musty parchment and obscure document was ransacked to rebuff or substantiate. The advocates for Cambridge contrived to lay the foundation of their University, exactly one hundred and

seventy three years after the flood; others asserted that Cambridge was founded in the fourth century before the Christian *Æra*; resting on the circumstance of one *Cantaber*, a Spaniard, having been reported to visit England in the days of Gurguntiu, who obtained Greek Professors from Athens. Twyne, the Oxford Champion, in a large Quarto, patiently refutes these claims, and asserts that Cambridge was a mere *colony* from Oxford, and unknown till about the reign of Henry the first, or Edward the second. Not content with demolishing his adversary's superstructure, the assailant, coolly advances on his part, that Oxford was verily founded by a colony of Greek Philosophers, who came into the Island with Brutus, and established a College at Cricklade, which was afterwards translated to Oxford!

The amount of Oxford's early claims is thus summed up by *Grafton*.

"Alfred founded the Vniuersity of Oxforde, and franchised the same with many great liberties and priuileges. But the historie of that Vniuersity of Oxforde, seemeth to make it to be of much greater antiquity, and to refer the beginning thereof vnto certaiue Greeke Philosophers that came into this Island with Brute and the Troyans, and afterwards placed themselves in a place not farre distant from Oxforde, called corruptly Crekelad, or Grekelade. The which Philosophers being afterwarde allured with the pleasant situation of the place, removed from thence to the soyle where Oxforde now standeth, and there taught the liberrall Sciences. And the same schole being at length decayed, and brought to extreme ruine by ciuill warre and alteration of time, Alfred, as a second founder restored it againe vnto the auncient state, who beside many other godly actes done for the encrease and maintenance of good learning, founded there a College, named Myekle Vniuersity Hall, now called the Vniuersity College, to the mainteyning and sustenance of the which he appointed a competent yerely reuenue to be payed out of the King's Cofers, by his heires and successours for euer, the which payment did still continue, as the monuments and auncient wrytings of the sayde College doe testifie, vntil the coming of Wylliam the Conquerour, who was the first that vpon displeasure conceyued against the Students and scholers there, withdrewe the sayde payment."

The story of Cricklade is opposed by *Sir John Spelman*, who considers Alfred, as the real founder, in which sentiment *Hearne* with some reluctance concurs, consoled by the declaration that "though it be admitted that Oxford was founded by Alfred, yet Cambridge is of a later date by some hundreds of years." Her first College (as another expresses it) having been a temporary shed, whilst about the 13th of Henry first, 1122, the scholars had so increased that "the largest *barn* or house they could procure could not contain them."

The sources of real honour are better understood in the present day, and are justly ascribed to the proportionate number of great men which the Universities have respectively produced, a laborious enumeration of which has been made by Dr. Parr, in the preface to his Spital Sermon.

118—page 148. '*There is a Witch at hand.*'

Although a general admission of the truth of witchcraft has existed from time immemorial, yet the belief in this country began to assume its more baneful aspect about the reign of Henry the sixth; and progressively

advanced in strength till the time of James the first, when the treatise on "Demonology" produced the very climax of this superstition.

In Henry VIIIth's reign, a law passed adjudging all witchcraft and sorcery to be felony, without benefit of clergy. In James the first's reign, this statute was confirmed with fresh enactments, declaring that "all persons invoking any evil spirit, or consulting, covenanting with, entertaining, employing, feeding, or rewarding any evil spirit, or taking up dead bodies from their graves to be used in any witchcraft, sorcery, charm, or enchantment, or killing, or otherwise hurting any person by such infernal arts, shall be guilty of felony and suffer death."

These laws were repealed only in 1736.

The superstitious having thus obtained *the law on their side*, the only remaining difficulty was to determine upon the true criteria for ascertaining a witch. Some readers may be amused by a little extension of this note.

Witches were divided into three classes—black, white, and grey. The black could hurt, but could not help; the white could help, but not hurt; and the grey could both help and hurt.

King James, in his *Demonology*, says.—"Witches can raise storms, and tempests in the air, either upon sea or land." And Reginald Scott observes, "that the Devil teacheth witches to make ointment of the bowels and members of children, whereby they ride in the air and accomplish all their desires. After burial," (he says) "they steal them out of their graves, and seeth them in a cauldron, till the flesh be made potable, of which they make an ointment, by which they ride in the air." The contents of Macbeth's cauldron was somewhat different. The accusation of our own Richard the third against "Shore's wife," will occur to every reader. Camden enumerates some of the supposed signs of witchcraft, such as a cow becoming dry. "They account also, every old woman who fetches fire on a May-day to be a witch, nor will they give fire on that day to any that are not sick, and then with an imprecation, otherwise believing that the witch will steal all the butter next summer. On May-day they kill all the hares they find among the cattle, supposing them to be the old women who have designs against their butter, which if stolen, they may recover, by taking some of the thatch over the witch's door, and burning it."

Every old woman who lived alone, in an old cottage, under a bank, especially if accompanied with a cat, and that a black one, was suspected at once to be a witch; and which suspicion was heightened into certainty if she happened to possess a more than ordinary wrinkled face. So universal was the belief in witchcraft, between 1399 and 1485, that Henry says, in this period, "there was not a man in England who entertained a doubt of the reality of Sorcery, Necromancy, and other diabolical arts."

The powers ascribed to witches were sometimes marvellously great, as, when they called up storms and sank vessels; and sometimes ludicrously trifling. In the *Gentleman's Magazine*, February 1759, a circumstance is mentioned, to which Butler refers; in the reign of Charles the second, that one Susannah Haynokes, an elderly woman of Wingrove, near Aylesbury, Berks, was accused by a neighbour for bewitching her *spinning-wheel*, so that it would not go round, and offered to make oath of the same before a Magistrate." The husband of Susannah being indignant at the

charge preferred against his wife, as the *decisive test*, offered, at once, to have her weighed against the *Church Bible*. This ordeal was accordingly resorted to, when the supposed culprit, outweighing the Bible, was triumphantly acquitted.

In the reign of Queen Elizabeth, a Mrs. Dier was accused of practising conjuration against the Queen, when Popham her Attorney was consulted, who pronounced that no bill of indictment would stand, for she did no act, and neither made picture nor wax figure; but Strype, who mentions the occurrence, remarks, "Whether it were the effect of magic, or proceeded from some natural cause, the Queen, in some part of this year, was under excessive anguish *by pains of her teeth*, insomuch that she took no rest for divers nights, and endured very great torment night and day." The chase even was liable to be interrupted by these malicious beings, as Scott gives the following recipe, "That never hunters nor their dogs may be bewitched, they cleave an oaken branch, and both they and their dogs pass over it."

Warner, in his remarks on Hampshire, speaks of Mary Dove, the witch of Beaulieu, who died about half a century ago,—“Her spells,” he says, “were chiefly used for purposes of self-extrication in situations of danger, and I myself have conversed with a rustic, whose father, he affirmed, had seen the old lady convert herself more than once into a hare or a cat, when likely to be apprehended in *wood-stealing*, to which she was somewhat addicted.”

It is related in the Life of Lord Keeper Guildford, that when his Lordship was on his circuit at Taunton-Dean, he detected an imposture and conspiracy against an old man, charged with having bewitched a girl of about thirteen years of age, who, during pretended convulsions, spit crooked pins into the by-standers' hands. As the Judge went down stairs out of Court, an hideous old woman cried: “God bless your worship!” “What's the matter good woman?” said the Judge. “My Lord!” said she, “forty years ago they would have hanged me for a witch, and they could not; and now they would have hanged my poor son.”

The first circuit his Lordship went westward, Mr. Justice Rainsford, who had gone the former circuit there, went with him; and he said that the year before, a witch was brought to Salisbury, and tried before him, when Sir James Long came to his chambers, and made a heavy complaint of this witch, and said that “if she escaped, his estate would not be worth any thing, for all the tenants would go away.”

Scott gives the following caution: “The witch must come to her arraignment backward, to wit, with her tail to the Judge's face, who must make many crosses at the time of her approaching the bar.”

In Sir J. Sinclair's Statistical Account of Scotland, it appears that witches were formerly *burnt* at Mid-Calder, county of Edinburgh. The method adopted to prevent those from sleeping who were confined on an accusation of witchcraft was, “To pierce their flesh with pins, needles and awls, or other sharp-pointed instruments. To rescue them from that oppression which sleep imposed on their almost exhausted nature, they sometimes used irons heated to a state of redness.”

Drawing blood from a witch, by scratching her skin was supposed to disarm her of her malignity, (as appears by *Glanvil's Account* of the “Demon of Tedworth,”) and if this became impracticable, the simple

remedy of nailing a horse-shoe on the threshold of the door, was absolutely infallible.

So late as 1716, Mrs. Hicks and her daughter, only nine years of age, were hanged in Huntingdon for witchcraft; for selling their souls to the devil; tormenting and destroying their neighbours; and above all, by raising a storm at sea, by which a ship was *almost* lost.

March 11, 1618, Margaret and Philip Flower were executed at Lincoln, for the supposed crime of bewitching Henry Lord Rosse, eldest son of Francis Manners, Earl of Rutland, and causing his death; also for barbarously tormenting, by a strange sickness, Francis, second son of the said Earl, and Lady Catherine, his daughter; and also for preventing, by their diabolical arts, the said Earl and his Countess from having any more children. Margaret Flower, it appears, confessed her crime, and that she had two familiars. In innumerable other instances also, witches have confessed their criminality, and appear to have believed what they have so confidently affirmed; but as Lord Bacon has observed, "Men may not too rashly believe the confession of witches, nor yet the evidence against them, for the witches themselves are imaginative, and believe oftentimes that they do that which they do not; and people are credulous in that point, and ready to impute accidents and natural operations to witchcraft."

But the most memorable witch occurrence, of late date, occurred at Tring, in Hertfordshire, April 22nd, 1751. "One B, a publican, giving out that he was bewitched by one Osborne and his wife, (harmless people above 70,) had it cried at several market towns that they were to be tried by ducking this day, which occasioned a vast concourse. The parish Officers removed the old couple from the work-house to the Church for safety, but the mob, missing them, broke the work-house windows, pulled down the pale, and demolished part of the house; then seizing the Governor, they threatened to drown him and fire the town, having straw in their hands for the purpose. The poor wretches were at length delivered up, for public safety, when they were dragged two miles to a muddy stream, where, after much ducking and ill-usage, the old woman was thrown on the bank, almost choked with mud, and expired in a few minutes; being kicked and beaten with sticks even after she was dead. The old man died soon after!"—*Gent's Mag.* 1751. The Coroner's inquest brought in a verdict of wilful murder, and one Colley, a chimney sweeper having been proved to be particularly active, was arraigned, found guilty, and *hung in chains*. Such was the superstition of the crowd that when they searched the work-house for the Witch, they even looked for her in the *salt-box*!

Pennant, in his tour in Scotland relates that at Paisley, 1696, amongst other witches arraigned, and executed for witchcraft there was one woman, young and handsome, who, after her conviction, being asked by her friends why she did not make a better defence on her trial, answered in the following dignified manner. "My prosecutors have destroyed my honour, and my life is not now worth defending."

Witch Finders were common; the most celebrated of whom was (according to Granger) one Mathew Hopkins, who obtained a good living by his avocation. The old, the ignorant, and the indigent, such as could neither plead their own cause, nor hire an advocate, were the miserable victims of this wretch's credulity, spleen, and avarice. His ultimate

reference was to ducking, previously to which, he shrewdly suspected guilt or not, from *special marks*, namely, moles, scorbutic spots, and warts. Such was the reputation of this man, that, in doubtful cases, he was often sent for from distant parts. It was ascertained that this Hopkins had hanged in one year no less than *sixty* reputed witches in his own county of Essex. He was so dexterous in his profession that people at length began to suspect that he had not come quite honestly by all his knowledge, and being taken up and tried as a Wizard, (no doubt, on good and sufficient evidence) the charge being brought home, he was, as he deserved, duly executed.

About this time a trial took place, in which a decrepid old woman was indicted for witchcraft. Several witnesses having concurred in swearing that they had seen her ride through the air on a broom-stick, the Judge addressed the prisoner and told her that the witnesses had so completely substantiated the charge, that there was but one possible way of saving her life, and that was, by flying as fast as she could, in the face of the whole court, through the open window that happened to be near her. The trembling old woman declared her inability, and said she *must be hanged*: upon which the Judge upbraided the lying witnesses, and directed the Jury to acquit the prisoner, properly remarking that if the accused really possessed the faculty of flying, she would certainly have exercised it on the present occasion, to save her life.—*Glanvil, Ellis and Brand.*

119.—page 153. 'He drops the purse.'

Alfred amongst his other virtues was distinguished for his charity, and commiseration for the poor! a part of his income being systematically appropriated to this object. The following were the chief coins current in his time.

		<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
The Mancus,	of Gold, value	2	6
The Aureus	do.	1	0
The Solidus or Shilling	do.	1	0
The Shilling,	of Silver,	0	5
The Trimma,	do.	0	3
The Penny,	do.	0	1
The Halfpenny	do.	0	0½
The Feorthing, or Farthing	—	0	0½

And the Styca, of Copper or Brass, two to a Farthing.

The common prices for the following, in Alfred's reign, were,—

	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>		<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
A Ram ...	0	4	A Hen ...	0	1
A prime Horse ...	10	0	Pair of Shoes ...	0	4
An Ox ...	2	6	A Coat ...	2	0
A Cow ...	1	8	A House Dog ...	0	4
A Sow ...	0	10	A Sheep Dog ...	2	0
A Sheep ...	0	5	A Cart Horse ...	5	0
A Goose ...	0	1			

An acre of land in Alfred's reign (*Warrington* says,) sold for sixteen

pence. Alfred left by legacy to each of his four Daughters, the sum of One hundred pounds, and to each of his two sons Five hundred.

In the age of Alfred, purchases were often effected by what was called *Living Money*. The lowest kind of exchange, and that which prevails in the infancy of all states is *Barter*. This *Living Money* formed the intermediate link between barter and purchases with coin: it consisted of slaves and cattle of all kinds that were estimated according to a fixed rate, at which they passed current in the purchase of commodities and in the payment of debts: so that when a debtor had not sufficient coin, he supplied the difference, with that which was esteemed equivalent to it, namely a number of Slaves, Horses, Cows, or Sheep, &c.

In the reign of the celebrated Welsh Prince, Howell Dha, (940) the king's taxes were commonly collected, not in money, but in horned cattle; and in more ancient times universally so. This Howell Dha had let out one of his Manors at an annual rent of *one pound*; but, (thus determining the comparative value of money) it was optional with the tenant either to pay the stipulated sum, or otherwise, to give his prince, as an equivalent, "One horse load of the best flour; a slaughtered ox; a cask of mead; one hundred and sixty sheaves (of oats, for the provender of the king's horses;) a sow; a flitch of bacon, and a vessel of butter."—See *Warrington*.

120 and 121.—page 155. 'The Danish Fleet.'

In the eighth century the piratical fleets of the Danes were inconsiderable, but in the following century they greatly increased, and it was not uncommon at this time for expeditions to consist of seven hundred vessels. The smallest being a kind of a twelve-oared bark, and the largest of them holding about one hundred and twenty men. Both Danish and Swedish Kings in the ninth century possessed Navies that consisted of from two thousand to twenty five hundred vessels.

Egbert, Ethelwulph, and his three eldest sons, harassed as they were by the Danes, were sensible of the disadvantages they laboured under in wanting a Fleet; and earnestly desired to supply that defect. But it is difficult to restore a naval power that has fallen into decay, in a country where there is little foreign trade, consequently no nursery for seamen; and in the face of enemies who are masters of the sea. To an ordinary genius this must appear impracticable. What admiration then is justly due to *Alfred* who not only attempted, but accomplished that difficult undertaking; who raised a mighty naval power, almost out of nothing, revived foreign trade, and wrested the dominion of the seas out of the hands of the insulting Danes!

Alfred's comprehensive mind soon perceived the great advantages to be obtained by a Fleet; and in this conviction he was confirmed by the example of his foes. He commenced therefore building of ships to oppose the Danes, and may justly be considered as the *Founder of the British Navy*. The Saxons having much neglected maritime affairs, after Alfred had built his ships, his own subjects were incapable of wholly manning them, and he was reduced to the necessity of engaging as assistants, *Frisians*, and other foreigners.

It is peculiarly interesting to the heart of an Englishman, to trace back to its origin, our high naval superiority. Its founder was not only Alfred, but our very first maritime engagement was fought by Alfred in person.

In the year 875, he equipped his first Fleet, to oppose the Danes on their own element, consisting of six small vessels, and to present his subjects with an example of what courage might effect, he boldly sailed himself in quest of the Danes. He was so fortunate (*Saxo* says) as to meet with an equal force of the enemy, when he commenced an engagement, took one of the vessels and put the rest to flight.

Afterwards a Fleet of one hundred and twenty Danish Vessels sailed up the River Ex, and besieged Exeter, whilst a large Army assaulted it by land. This was the moment for Alfred to testify to his subjects the importance of the Ships he had been so sedulous in preparing. Whilst he marched to the relief of the City by land, he ordered his Infant Navy to sail up the river and attack them by Sea; an expedition that so completely succeeded, that every Danish ship was destroyed, whilst the defeated enemy acceded to an ignominious peace.

The Navy was the object of Alfred's particular care. He habitually went on board the Vessels himself, to be satisfied in all particulars and to consider what Military Engines might most effectually be employed. One of his first objects was to build his ships on a larger scale than the Danes, and this circumstance gave his ships such a decided superiority in his encounters with the enemy, that having been defeated in a succession of engagements, they at length relinquished all open hostility, and merely landed by stealth on those parts of the coasts which were least defended.

But Alfred perceived that the Danes under the Pirate *Sigferth*, possessed a description of ships, which from their particular construction, always escaped his own ships, by their superior sailing. The King immediately constructed Vessels to oppose them, resembling gallies, longer, larger and steadier than the Danes as well as more lofty, by which his men possessed great advantage in casting their Javelins. He also provided each of his new ships with sixty oars, worked from the lower deck, and which altogether gave his ships such a decided superiority, both in fighting and sailing, that in a little time he swept his own seas of the Pirates, and compelled them to obtain their precarious subsistence by ravaging other countries.

Ethelwerd, in his Chronicle, thus recounts some of the Marine Conflicts of Alfred with the Danes. 'Alfred not satisfied with contending with the Danes by land determined to become his own Admiral, and fitted out a fleet; when, taking himself the command, he sailed in quest of the enemy's fleet, and boldly encountering the foe, he routed them, and took one of their 'seven tall vessels.'

On another occasion, Alfred took the command of his fleet, and coming up with the Danish force, boldly encountered the enemy, and, of their four large ships, captured two, when the other two surrendered.

On another occasion, Alfred, becoming his own Admiral, sailed with his Fleet, in quest of the Danes, to the coast of East Anglia, and there meeting with thirteen ships of the enemy, after a desperate engagement he captured the whole. So that Alfred appears to have been '*The illustrious Father of the British Navy!*'

'122.—page 157. '*I am the Wife of one Renowned in war.*'

It was common for the Wives of the Danes to attend their husbands to battle; before the onset stimulating their valour; and if they sustained

defeat they were upbraided by their wives, and in some instances, for their cowardice, slain. Some Danish Women (mentioned by *Olaus*) led armies to the field; in which circumstances of heroism they were equalled by our own *Elfreda*, the *Daughter of Alfred*, who inherited more of her father's spirit and wisdom than any of his children. She not only fought the Danes, in several battles, (according to *Henry of Huntingdon*) but in the space of three years built no less than eight Castles to oppose their progress.

123.—page 158. '*Thou art a gallant chief.*'

Alfred, in his severe conflict with Hastings, the Dane, had taken the Wife and two Sons of his foe, prisoners. These he loaded with presents and generously returned, without a ransom, to Hastings. About a year afterward, this warlike Dane marched on a plundering expedition into Mercia. Alfred commenced his opposition by attacking his enemy's camp at Benfleet, of which he possessed himself, and a second time made captives of the wife and children of his rival. The King consulted his own generous feelings, and with his usual magnanimity returned them in safety once more to his inveterate foe.

124.—page 159. '*Ordeal.*'

It was by an appeal to some ordeal, among the Anglo-Saxons, by which the validity of any criminal charge was attested. There were five kinds of ordeals common at this time. 1. The ordeal of hot iron. 2. The ordeal of hot water. 3. The ordeal of cold water. 4. The ordeal of the corsned; and 5. The ordeal of the cross.

1. The ordeal of hot iron. This was of two kinds, and performed either with a ball of iron, or with a certain number of plough-shares. The former was conducted in this manner: A ball of iron was prepared, of one, two, or three pound weight, according to the nature of the accusation. When all the prayers and other religious ceremonies were finished, this ball was put into a fire, and made red hot, after which it was taken out. The accused having signed himself with the cross, and sprinkled his hand with holy water, took the ball of hot iron in his hand, and carried it to a distance of nine feet; after which his hand was put into a bag, and sealed up for three days; at the expiration of which it was examined, in the presence of twelve persons of each party. If any marks of burning appeared on it, the accused was found guilty: if none, he was declared innocent. The other way of performing this ordeal was, by making the person who was to be tried, walk blindfolded, with his feet bare, over nine hot plough-shares, placed at certain distances. If he did this without being burnt, he was adjudged innocent; if not, guilty. 2. The ordeal of hot water. When the private preparations were finished, the person to be tried was conducted with great solemnity to the church, where the priest began, by saying certain prayers suitable to the occasion; after which mass was to be celebrated: and before the accused was permitted to communicate, he was adjured in the most awful form of words, to confess if he was guilty. Fire was then kindled under a pot, filled with water, and whilst the water was heating, the priest said many prayers composed for that purpose. As soon as the water began to boil, a stone was suspended in it by a string, at the depth of one, two, or three palms, according to the nature of the accusa-

tion. The pot was then taken down and placed by the side of the fire, and the prisoner having said the Lord's prayer, and marked himself with the sign of the cross, plunged his naked hand and arm into the water and snatched out the stone. His arm was instantly wrapped in linen cloths, and put into a bag, which was sealed by the judge in the presence of the spectators. The accused was then restored to the priest, who produced him in the same church at the end of three days; when the bag was opened, the bandages taken off, and the arm examined by twelve of his own friends, and twelve of the friends of the prosecutor. If any marks of scalding then appeared upon the arm, the prisoner was found guilty, if no such marks could be discovered, he was acquitted. 3. The Ordeal by cold water. The person who was to be tried by this test, was put under the direction of a priest, who obliged him to fast for three days, when he was publicly brought into the church, and conjured to confess the truth; if he then persisted in his innocence, he was immediately conducted to the pool, where a priest prayed, that if he was guilty, the water might reject him, and cause him to float upon the water; but that if he was innocent, that it would receive him into its bosom. The accused was then stripped naked, his hands and legs made fast, and a rope tied about his middle, with a knot upon it, at a distance of a yard and a half from his body; he was then thrown into the pool, if he floated he was taken out and declared guilty; if he sank so deep as to bring the knot on the rope under water, he was instantly pulled out and pronounced innocent. 4. The Ordeal of the Corsned. The Corsned, or the consecrated bread and cheese, was the ordeal to which the *clergy* commonly appealed when they were accused of any crime; in which they acted a very prudent part, as it was attended with neither danger nor inconvenience. This ordeal was performed in the following manner. A piece of barley bread and a piece of cheese, were laid upon the altar, over which a priest pronounced certain conjurations, and prayed with great fervency, that if the person accused was guilty, God would send his angel Gabriel to stop his throat, that he might not be able to swallow that bread and cheese. These prayers being ended, the culprit approached the altar, took up the bread and cheese, and began to eat it. If he swallowed freely he was declared innocent, but if it stuck in his throat, and he could not swallow it, he was pronounced guilty. 5. The Ordeal of the Cross. The cross was an object of so much superstitious veneration during the times of the Anglo-Saxons, that it is no wonder it should be employed as an ordeal. In criminal trials, the trial of the cross, was commonly thus conducted: When the prisoner had declared his innocence upon oath, and appealed to the judgment of the cross, two sticks were prepared exactly like one another; the figure of the cross was then cut on one of these sticks, and nothing on the other; each of them was then wrapped up in a quantity of fine white wool, and laid on the altar, or on the relics of the saints; after which a solemn prayer was put up to God, that he would be pleased to discover, by evident signs, whether the prisoner was innocent or guilty. These solemnities being finished, a priest approached the altar, and took up one of the sticks, which was uncovered with much anxiety. If it was the stick marked with the cross, the prisoner was pronounced innocent; if it was the other, he was declared guilty. When the judgment of the cross was appealed to in civil cases, the trial was conducted in this manner: The judges, parties, and all concerned,

being assembled in a church, each of the parties chose a priest, the youngest and stoutest that he could find, to be his representative in the trial. These representatives were then placed, one on each side of some crucifix, and at a signal given, they both at once stretched their arms at full length, so as to form a cross with their body. In this painful posture they continued to stand, while divine service was performing; and the party whose representative dropped his arm first, lost his cause. The ordeal by judicial combat was not introduced, till nearly two centuries after this period.—*Henry*.

125.—page 165. '*Reached us, that Hubba from the Cambrian shore.*'

Hubba had invaded Wales, and destroyed all with fire and sword. After which he entered Devonshire, in the kingdom of Wessex, with the same intent. At his approach Oddune, Earl of Devon, with his brave men retired into Kenwith Castle, to avoid the first shock of the Danish fury. Hubba was not long before he laid siege to this Castle.

Camden says, that Kenwith Castle stood on the River Taw, on the coast of the Bristol Channel. No vestige at present remains of this castle.

126.—page 170. '*The accustomed chase forbade.*'

The Anglo-Saxons were greatly attached to the sports of the field, in which sports persons of rank and fortune spent the greatest part of their time, when they were not engaged in war. Alfred was taught to hunt before he was taught to read; and of his skill in these sports, *Asser* thus speaks: "Before he was twelve years of age, he was a most expert and active hunter, and excelled in all the branches of that most noble art, to which he applied with incessant labour and most amazing success. For, his felicity in hunting, as well as in all other gifts of God, was really incomparable, as I myself have often witnessed." The business of a hunter was a more serious occupation at that period than it is at present, when wolves, bears, and boars, were the common objects of the chase.

127.—page 170. '*Spinning wheel.*'

"From the time of the Saxons down nearly to our own, spinning has been the common occupation of women, so much so, that the spindle became the symbol of the sex, and an estate devolving to the female line, was formerly said, by the law, to descend to the distaff."—*Blackstone*.

128.—page 170. — '*Or Ludd's calamities.*'

National traditions and tales, however wild, are always interesting. "Beli the Great reigned over Britain forty years. He had four sons, of whom Ludd, who was the eldest, succeeded to the sovereignty, on the death of his father. Having made the place of his residence superior to any other known city, he gave it the name of *Caer-Ludd*, (*Ludd's town*.) It was at a later period called *Caer-Lundain*, and *London*.

"In the reign of Ludd, three calamities, such as had never before been known, fell upon Britain. The first of these was that of the *Coranians*, (enemies who lived near the *Humber*,) who had such intelligence, that not a word could make an impression on the air, but they knew it, and therefore, it was impossible to effect any thing against them.

"The second calamity was a shriek, that was heard over every hearth

in Britain, on the night of every May-day, and so struck every man and beast to the heart, that the men lost their strength; the youth of either sex became senseless, and the beasts and trees unproductive.

"The third was, that whatever store of provision was brought together in any of the great houses in Britain, the whole disappeared, so as never after to be found, saving what was used in the first night.

"The cause of the first of these calamities was apparent! but the causes of the other two were sought in vain; and Ludd therefore having ineffectually exerted his utmost care and prudence, and being greatly distressed at the existence of such calamities in his kingdom, determined to go and consult his brother Llefelys, King of France, concerning them. For this purpose he embarked and sailed to Gaul, where his brother received him in the most affectionate manner; and having learnt the occasion of his arrival, he ordered a long tube to be made, through which they might so converse, that the air should not convey the sound to the Coranians.

"By this means they began to communicate their secret thoughts, but soon found that neither could hear any thing but confused and indistinct sounds; whereby Llefelys perceived that a Demon had lodged himself in the tube, he, therefore ordered it to be washed with wine, and then their words became perfectly distinct and intelligible.

"Llefelys then gave Ludd worms of a particular kind, which on his return, he desired him to bruise and put in cold water, and then to assemble the people, indiscriminately, both Britons and Coranians, and sprinkle them all with that water, and that such would be its efficacy, as to kill all the Coranians, without doing any injury to the Britons.

"The second plague, said he, arises from a contest between the Dragon of your island, and the Dragon of a foreign nation, which on the night of May-day, endeavours to conquer her, and the shriek you hear, is given by your Dragon, in her rage and distress; which you may thus be assured of:—Find by admeasurement, in length and breadth, the centre of the island, and there let a pit be dug in the earth, and let a large vessel, of the best mead that can be procured, be set in the pit, and the mouth of the vessel be covered over with a linen cloth. Do you keep watch by it; and you will hear their conflict in the air. When they are weary of contending, they will, in the form of two pigs, fall on the linen cloth, and drink the mead, and drawing the cloth with them to the bottom of the vessel, fall asleep. When they are in that state, fold the cloth around them, and bury them deep in the earth in the most secure part of the kingdom, and whilst they are there no calamity from abroad shall afflict the island.

"A powerful Magician is the cause of the third calamity; for he by charms and spells, throws every one into a profound sleep, and then carries off the provisions.

"To remedy this evil, you must yourself watch your time and defend your stores; and to avoid sleeping, you must have a vessel of cold water near you, and when drowsiness comes on, go into the water; and, when he appears, avenge yourself upon him.

"Ludd thus instructed returned home, called all the people together, and having sprinkled the water on them, in general the Coranians died and the Britons remained uninjured.

"He then immediately ordered the island to be measured, in length and breadth, and the centre was found to be *Oxford*, where he then ordered a

pit to be dug, and every thing occurred as his brother had foretold. When the pigs fell fast asleep, Ludd wrapped them up in the cloth, and laid them in a stone chest, and buried them deep in the earth, and from that time this terrible calamity ceased.

"After this he ordered a well-furnished table to be laid out, and when it was so, a large vessel of water to be set near it, and then took his station to watch it. As the night advanced far on, sounds the most melodious were heard, which inclined him so much to sleep, that he was obliged frequently to go into the water to prevent it. At last he perceived a man of huge stature, and in armour, enter with a large basket, in which he put all the viands. But as he was about to depart with them, Ludd came forward and prevented him; and told him it should now be a trial of strength between them, whether any more such depredations should be committed by him. A furious combat immediately began, in which Ludd was at last victorious, and the Magician cried for quarter, and promised a compensation for the losses he had occasioned, and faithful service to the King for the future, and thus Ludd put an end to these three great calamities."—*Tysilio's Chronicle*.

Verstegan objects to the etymology of London, from Ludd's-Town, as it contains the Saxon termination "Town," and remarks, that instead of being Ludd's-Town, to be truly British, "it ought to be Caer-Ludd." It appears from the above, *Tysilio's Welsh Chronicle*, translated by the Rev. P. Roberts, that London was anciently designated "Caer-Ludd."

129.—page 183. '*Tho' Odin's self before me stood.*'

The Danes very commonly, in the excess of their courage, defied the gods themselves. *Saxo Grammaticus* speaks of a Dane, who ardently wished to meet with Odin, that he might attack him. "Where is he (he cried) whom they call Odin, that warrior so completely armed, who hath but one eye to guide him? Ah, if I could but see him, this redoubted spouse of Freya; in vain should he be covered in his snow-white buckler, in vain mounted on his lofty steed, he should not leave his abode of Lothra without a wound. It is lawful to encounter a warrior god."

130.—page 184. '*By my horse's mane.*'

To swear by his horse's mane, or head, was common with the Danes. A horse's head was also supposed to possess another quality.

"Whatever Dane (says *Saxo Grammaticus*,) devoteth himself to the ruin of his enemy, or would preserve his fortunes from hostile force, made himself first a pole or long spear of hazel, or other kind of wood, on the top of which he fixed the head of a horse, which before, in solemn manner, he had sacrificed to the Infernal Gods, placing it so upon the spear, that with open jaws, and grinning visage, it might terrify the enemy. This done, there were engraven upon the pole or spear, *Runic Characters*, and then it was set up with many direful forms of incantation, in those places where the approach of an enemy was suspected."

131.—page 186. '*Ogbert.*' *The fight began.*

Ogbert, or Osbert one of the two kings of Northumberland, whom Hubba defeated before he attacked Ella.

132.—page 187.

The dying Ode of Regner Lodbrog, written in Runic, or Icelandic Verse, has been translated by Bishop Percy, in Twenty-eight Stanzas. The two first, and the two last, are here given.

1

We fought with swords: * * * when in Gothland I slew an enormous serpent: my reward was the beauteous Thora. Thence I was deemed a man: they called me Lodbrog from that slaughter. * * * I thrust the monster through with my spear, with the steel productive of splendid rewards.

2

We fought with swords: I was very young, when towards the East, in the straits of Kirar, we gained rivers of blood for the ravenous wolf: ample food for the yellow-footed fowl. There the hard iron sung upon the lofty helmets. The whole ocean was one wound. The raven waded in the blood of the slain. * * * * *

27

We fought with swords. Battles fifty and one have been fought under my banners. From my early youth I learnt to dye my sword in crimson: I never yet could find a king more valiant than myself. The gods now invite me to them. Death is not to be lamented.

28

'Tis with joy I cease. The goddesses of destiny are come to fetch me, Odin hath sent them from the habitation of the gods. I shall be joyfully received into the highest seat; I shall quaff full goblets among the gods. The hours of my life are past away. I die laughing.—See Bishop Percy's *five pieces of Runic Poetry*.

133.—page 188. '*Raised the loud shout as Ella groan'd and died.*'

This is the precise death which Ella suffered from the ferocious sons of Regner Lodbrog. It was called 'Carving the Eagle.'

134.—page 189. '*Peaceful beside some brother of the wood.*'

It is not uncommon in the same pitfall in the north, to find animals of different kinds (from the power of fear) all peaceably lying by each other; although between them in a state of freedom, the greatest hostility existed.

135.—page 191. '*A victim's blood must flow.*'

The Danes sacrificed to their gods, horses, dogs, and falcons, and on some occasions, cocks, and a fat bull. In times however of famine, or other national calamity, or at the eve of some dangerous war, they offered human sacrifices to their gods, believing them to be more acceptable than any other. The victims were chosen from the prisoners in time of war, and from the slaves in time of peace. The choice was partly regulated by the by-standers, and partly by lot. The wretches upon whom the lot fell, were treated with such honours by the assembly, that they sometimes

congratulated themselves on their destiny. But the Danes did not always sacrifice such mean persons; in great famines or other calamities, if the people thought they had some pretext to impute the cause of it to their king, they even sacrificed him without hesitation, as the highest price with which they could purchase the divine favour. In this manner the first king of Vermland was burnt in honor of Odin, to put an end to a great dearth. Hacon king of Norway, offered his son in sacrifice to obtain of Odin the victory over his enemy Harold. And Aune, king of Sweden, devoted to Odin the blood of his nine sons, to prevail on that god to prolong his life.

136.—page 191. '*Nine long days.*'

The Danes were particularly fond of the number nine. Thus the ring which Hermod bore through the flames of Hela, had the wonderful power given it by Odin of producing every *ninth* night, eight similar rings. The government of Hela consisted of *nine* worlds. Thor, in his contest with the great serpent of Midgard, recoils back *nine* steps. There are *nine* great rivers in hell; and Hermod in his journey to hell, in search of Balder, travelled for *nine* days and *nine* nights, through deep and dark valleys, before he arrived at the abode of Hela. Every *ninth* month the Danes renewed their sacrificing, which lasted *nine* days, at which time *nine* living victims were offered.

137.—page 192. '*The Birds of the deepest Hell.*'

See Solar Hymn, at the end of the Edda of Sæmond.

138.—page 193. '*Fair as Gimer's child.*'

Gerda, daughter of Gimer, of the race of the giants, is extolled for her beauty, in the "Journey of Skirner," See Edda.

139.—page 203. '*And still beside my cottage on it runs.*'

The uniformity of Nature, in all her operations, must strike every reflecting mind, and which appears, among sublunary things, in the equable flow of tides and rivers. This uniformity extends also to all the *brooks* that originate in springs, rather than in mountain torrents, or the casual supply of rain.

Baron Humboldt has remarked that the springs of Greece flow now with the same copiousness, and even temperament, which they did in the time of Herodotus;—the *Castalian*, near Parnassus, and the *Piereman*, near Corinth. A well, connected with a living-spring, sunk at Coelis, in 1126, still continues to flow, as at first.

140.—page 204. '*He never paid the bad man's penalty.*'

"Amongst the Saxons the punishment for all offences might, for the most part, have been redeemed, if the party delinquent were of ability to make a ransom; for the rule of justice in those days was this: The person of every one, from the King to the Bondman, and every limb and member of every person was valued at a certain estimation."—(*Sir John Spelman.*) "Prices were set upon bruises, maims, and wounds, in every part of the body, according to their length, breadth, and depth, with a great degree of accuracy and minuteness. These prices were formed into a kind of book

of rate, which every judge was obliged to get by heart, before he could sit in judgment. When any person was convicted of having wounded another, the judge declared out of the doom-book, the price of a wound of such a dimension, in such a part of the body; and this the criminal was obliged to pay to the person wounded; and by a law of King Edmund, it was declared that no abatement could be made. A compensation could be made for even murder itself, each man from the prince to the beggar having an established price, which was called his Were or Weregyld, one half of which was to be paid to the family of the murdered person, as a compensation for the loss of his relation, and the other half to the public for the loss of a member of the community; so that the principle of the Saxon law was, "that there was no crime which might not be expiated with money." This principle of jurisprudence was common in most parts of Europe, except, that different values were set in different kingdoms and provinces on the same offence; but when an individual removed from one place to another, his life and limbs continued to be valued at the same rate they had formerly been; and any injury that was done by him, was compensated according to those of the country in which he resided. This gave those persons who removed from a rich country into a poor one, much less security for their lives, limbs, and properties. The nose of a Spaniard, for example, was perfectly safe in England, because it was valued at thirteen marks; but the nose of an Englishman ran a great risk in Spain, because it was valued at only twelve shillings; and on the contrary an Englishman might have broken a Welshman's head for a mere trifle; but few Welshmen could afford to return the compliment." Christianity undermined, and at length totally abolished these unjust and inadequate laws. The following are some of the laws of Ethelbert, King of Kent:

"1. Let him that killeth a man in the city of an Earl be amerced twelve shillings.

2. If a man catch another by the hair let him pay fifty sextas.

3. If the bone of the leg appear, let him make a compensation of three shillings.

4. If the shoulder be lamed, let him compensate it with twenty shillings.

5. If he be made deaf of an ear, let it be compensated with twenty-five shillings.

6. If the ear be clipped off, be it compensated with six shillings.

7. If the nose be bored through, let nine shillings compensate it.

8. If both nostrils be slit, let each be compensated with six shillings.

9. If the eye be struck out, let fifty shillings compensate it.

10. Let him that cutteth off the chin-bone make a compensation of twenty-five shillings.

11. Let each of the fore-teeth be compensated with six shillings, for the one that stands next four shillings, for the next three shillings, and for each of the rest, one.

12. If the thumb be cut off, let the compensation be twenty shillings; the nail of the thumb, with three shillings; the fore-finger, with eight shillings; the middle finger, with four shillings; the ring-finger, with six shillings; the little finger, with eleven shillings. For each nail one shilling.

13. For the least blemish, three shillings; for the greater ones, six shillings.

14. If any one give another a blow on the nose with his fist, let him pay three shillings.

15. If a man's thigh be broken, let twelve shillings be the recompense.

16. If a rib be broken, let it be compensated with three shillings.

17. If the foot be cut off, with fifty shillings.

18. If the great toe be cut off, with ten shillings.

Among the laws of the Welsh Kings there was one penalty for *striking the Queen*.

The following is one of the laws of Ina, King of the West-Saxons :

If any one kill a stranger, the King shall have two-parts of the estimation of his life, and the third, his children, or relations. A *Welshman* paying yearly lot shall be valued at one hundred and twenty shillings, his son at one hundred, a servant sometimes sixty, and sometimes fifty shillings. A *Welshman* shall buy off a *whipping* for twelve shillings. A *Welshman's* life, possessing five hides of land, shall be valued at six hundred shillings."

If a *Welshman* was found on the Mercian side of Offa's Dyke, the established penalty was the loss of his ears : but as severity always excites retaliation, so the hostile spirit of the Welsh was equally marked toward the English. A Crusader who had killed a Moor, immediately decorated his escutcheon with a *Saracen's head*. In the same spirit Edmyfed Vychen, ancestor of Owen Tudor, wore as his arms—*Gules, a Cheveron, between three Englishmen's heads, coupéd, proper*.

Offa, King of Mercia bore the Welsh a mortal antipathy, which was returned in full measure by the Ancient Britons, who often discovered their spirit by actions, and on the following occasion they preceded them by words: Renulf, having been overcome by Offa, was obliged to fly for safety to Merfyn, Prince of Powis, (the central part of Wales.) Offa wrote to Merfyn, charging him with treasons, plots, and conspiracies, and conveying a peremptory order immediately to give up Kenulf, in order to avoid destruction. Merfyn and his Nobles assembled, and having read the letter, they concluded the consultation, by transmitting an answer to this purport : "That the 'powerful King of Powis ought by no means to fear the little King Offa, (governing nearly half of England,) who was silly, mad, and possessed of the devil ; and that if he dared to attack him, he would arm all Wales in his defence."—*Sammes*.

141.—page 204. '*Nor stopped the flying criminal all pale.*'

It was deemed a great crime to stop any criminal who was flying to a place of sanctuary. As a fierce and unpolished people are apt to resent any offence with instantaneous and excessive violence, the first Legislators of almost all nations have adopted the humane law of appointing certain places of refuge ; and giving authority to persons of the highest rank and greatest power, to defend all persons who put themselves under their protection from immediate violence. The king's court, and all churches were declared sanctuaries by the Anglo-Saxon laws, and criminals who fled to them were protected from violence for a certain time, that they might have an opportunity of making satisfaction for the injuries which they had done, and of compromising with those whom they had offended. By the same laws, kings and bishops had authority to defend those criminals who put themselves under their protection, for nine days, and abbots and alder-

men for three days, but if they did not make satisfaction within that time, they were to be brought to justice, and punished according to law. At Hexham, in Northumberland, there was a sanctuary of a peculiar kind, it was called the Stool of Peace. This spot had the privilege of a sanctuary, which was not merely confined to the church, in which stood the Stool of Peace, but extended a mile four ways, and the limits each way were marked by a cross. Heavy penalties were levied on those who dared to violate this sanctuary, by seizing on any criminal within the prescribed bounds; but if they presumed to take him out of the Stool, the offence was not redeemable by any sum, and the offenders were left to the utmost severity of the church, and suffered excommunication, in old times the most terrible of punishments. Places of refuge were subsequently converted into sanctuaries, and which were recognized by the laws of our own country till the Reformation.

142—page 205. '*To the far Church to barter.*'

Weekly fairs, among the Anglo-Saxons, were commonly held on a Sunday, and in the parish churches, the reason for which was, that the people might have an opportunity of procuring necessities for the ensuing week, when they came together for the purposes of religion. But the mixture of secular and religious affairs having been found inconvenient in many respects, at a council, convened by Athelstan in the year 928, it was ordained that fairs and markets should no longer be held on the Lord's-day; and from that time, fairs were appointed to be held on Saturdays, and near the church, not in it, that those who came from a distance might have an opportunity of attending divine service the day after, if they chose it.

The custom of having fairs on a Sunday, appears to have revived in the Norman time, when the *chapmen* who attended the fair, in the morning of the Saint's day, attended the church, and after service proceeded to open the wake. "Great numbers attending at these wakes, by degrees, less devotion and reverence were observed, till at length from hawkers and pedlars coming thither to sell their petty wares, the merchants came also and set up stalls and booths in the *church-yards*, and not only those who lived in the parish to which the church belonged resorted thither, but others also from all the neighbouring towns and villages: and the greater reputation of the Saint, the greater were the numbers that flocked together on this occasion. The holding of these fairs on a Sunday was justly found fault with by the clergy. The Abbot of Ely, in King John's time, inveighed much against so flagrant a profanation of the Sabbath; but this irreligious custom was not entirely abolished till the reign of Henry the Sixth."—*Brand*.

The more enlightened opinion in the present day is, that fairs (with very few exceptions,) are highly prejudicial to the community. When population was less extensive, and the intercourse and means of conveyance between different districts were more difficult, those periodical assemblages of wares and produce were not only useful, but indispensable, as the first families from these depots provided themselves with necessities for the whole intervening season.

It appears from a record of the household of Henry Percy, the fifth Earl of Northumberland, in Henry VIII.'s reign, (published by Bishop

Percy) that the stores of his Lordship's house, at Wresille, for the whole year, were laid in from fairs. "He that stands charged with my Lorde's house for the houll yeir, if he maye possible, shall be at all faires, where the groise emptions shall be boughte for the house for the houll yeir, as wine, wax, beiffes, multons, wheite, and malt." Beiffes and multons were salted oxen and sheep.

Fairs, in ancient times, were placed under the immediate cognizance of the Bishops, who commonly obtained from the King, the profits of the toll from which they often derived great emoluments. The principal fairs, from their extent, were commonly held on extensive plains. The great fair at St. Giles's Down, near Winchester, was instituted by William the Conqueror; and its revenues were given, by him, to the Bishop. It was first for three days, but was afterwards prolonged by Henry the Third to sixteen days. Its jurisdiction comprehended a compass of seven miles, and included even Southampton. Officers were placed at all bridges and other avenues of access to the fair, to exact the stipulated toll, and notwithstanding its injustice and impolicy, all resident merchants and traders, in the given district, were prohibited, during the fair, from selling their own commodities, on pain of confiscation.

143—page 206. '*As Ocean when he roareth.*'

There was a superstition among the Anglo-Saxons, that the sea, in a tempest, was a monster that roared for human flesh.

144—page 206. '*As late at Croyland.*'

"Abbeys were universally plundered by the Danes. After the destruction of the fine abbey of Croyland (see No. 84.), the Danes, with great plunder, marched to the splendid monastery of Peterborough; this monastery, for its architecture, was the glory of the age. In it was contained a large assemblage of the choicest books, which the heads of the establishment had been two centuries in collecting. The Danes first assailed the gates, and then with their machines attacked the walls. In the second assault the doors were burst, when Hubba led the bloodhounds to their prey. He himself slew the Abbot, as well as the Monks, whilst all the inhabitants, who crowded there with the hope of refuge, were slaughtered by his followers. The superb edifice was soon involved in flames, and it is said the conflagration continued for fifteen days. After the ferocious enemy had retired, the bodies of eighty-four ecclesiastics, mutilated and half burnt, were collected, when the whole, including the Abbot, were interred in one large grave, whilst over them was erected a lofty pyramid, as a memorial of the catastrophe. Robert de Swapham (*Speed* says) saw the stones that composed this monastery of Peterborough (then called Medishamstede), built by Peada, the first Christian king of Mercia, and which were so large, that eight yoke of oxen could scarcely move any one of them. The value of the books before referred to, may be estimated from the circumstance of Alfred, king of Northumberland, having given for one book an estate of eight hides of land. A hide is differently stated to have been from sixty to one hundred acres. Peada was as zealous for Christianity as his predecessor, Wulfhere, was hostile. This latter king had his two sons put to death, for deserting the Pagan faith of their ancestors."—*Strutt*.

145—page 208. '*Had reared Monastic Pile.*'

The erection of a monastery, at this time, was believed to be the high road to heaven. When Earl Alwine, the richest man in England, applied to St. Oswald, in the reign of Edgar the Peaceable, to know what he should do to obtain the pardon of his sins, the saint, after expatiating on the virtues of a cloistered life, continues to say. "I intreat you therefore, my dear son, if you have any place in your estate fit for that purpose, that you immediately build a monastery, and fill it with holy monks, whose prayers will supply all your defects, and expiate all your crimes." The building of Ramsey Abbey was the consequence of this address.

What was given at this time to monasteries, was represented as being given virtually to the donor's own soul: thus "King Ethelwulf," (says *Asser*) "like a wise man, made his testament in writing, and divided his estate between his soul (the church) and his children: what he gave to his children I need not mention; what he gave to his soul was as follows, &c., &c."

146—page 209. '*Built by our Alfred.*'

Alfred expended a great part of his income in building and endowing religious houses. He built the monastery at Æthelney, the monastery of Shaftesbury, the monastery of Winchester; and contributed to the support of almost all the religious houses in England, Wales, and Ireland, according as their necessities required. He was also a great benefactor to the abbey of Glastonbury as well as to that of Wilton, and the founder of numerous houses for the instruction of youth, throughout the whole of his kingdom. He rebuilt and repaired all the cities and towns, together with the parish churches which had been destroyed by the ravages of the Danes at different periods; he also founded the University of Oxford, as mentioned in a former note. (117.)

147—page 210. '*Who to great Rome hath gone on pilgrimage.*'

The Anglo-Saxons placed much of their religion in performing pilgrimages to Jerusalem, Rome, and other places, both at home and abroad, that had obtained the name of extraordinary sanctity. These pilgrimages, especially to Rome, were enjoined upon sinners as the most satisfactory penances for the greatest crimes, and recommended to saints as the most acceptable service to God. Few pious persons of any rank in those times could die in peace, or think themselves sure of heaven, till they had kissed the pope's toe, and visited the pretended sepulchres of St. Peter and St. Paul, at Rome. "I had been told (says Canute the great) that the apostle Peter had received great authority from the Lord, and that he held the keys of heaven; and therefore I thought it absolutely necessary to secure his favour by a pilgrimage to Rome." For such reasons, kings, queens, nobles, prelates, monks, nuns, saints and sinners, wise men and fools, were impatient to undertake these religious journeys, and all the roads between Rome and England, were constantly crowded with English pilgrims.

Alfred, in his journey through France, on a Pilgrimage to Rome, with his father Ethelwulf, was introduced to Grimbald, an Ecclesiastic. Tho' young, the Prince possessed discernment enough to perceive that Grimbald was a man of superior attainments, and on ascending the throne he sent for him, made him his friend and counsellor, and provided for him munificently.

148—page 211. —‘*Yonder Harp.*’

The harp was the favourite musical instrument of both the Saxons and Danes. Those who played upon the harp were admitted into the highest company, and treated with the most distinguished respect wherever they appeared. Other musical instruments were known at this period. *Venerable Bede*, in his treatise on music, says, “The instruments of practical music are either natural or artificial; the natural instruments are, the lungs, the throat, the tongue, and the palate; the artificial instruments are, the violin, the harp, the atola, the psaltery, the trumpet, the tabor, the pipe, and the flute.”

Both music and poetry were much admired and cultivated by the Anglo-Saxons. The halls of all the Saxon kings, princes, and nobles, are represented as ringing with the united sound of the poet's voice, and the musician's harp. The poet and the musician were most commonly the same person, who, blessed at once with a poetical genius, a tuneful voice, and skillful hand, sung and played the song which he had composed. Talents so various and delightful were objects of ambition to the greatest monarchs, and procured the meanest who possessed them, both riches, honors, and royal favour. Alfred, who united every pleasing to every great accomplishment, excelled as much in music as he did in war; and ravished his enemies with his harp, before he subdued them with his sword. “Not long after, (says *William of Malmesbury*) Alfred adventured to leave his hiding-place, and gave a proof of his great wisdom and dexterity. For taking his harp in his hand, and pretending to be a poet and musician, he entered the enemy's camp. Being admitted into the royal tent, he entertained the Danish generals with his songs and music, and thereby had an opportunity of gaining all the intelligence he desired.”

149.—page 219. ‘*With such sweet notes of tenderest minstrelsey.*’

The songs of the Scalds, especially when accompanied with the harp, are said to have produced the most wonderful effects, and to have roused or soothed the most impetuous passions of the human mind. Revenge rages with the greatest violence in the hearts of warlike fierce barbarians, and is of all their passions, the most furious and ungovernable; and yet it has often been subdued by the enchanting power of poetry. Egill, a famous poet of old times, had quarrelled with Eric, King of Norway: and in course of that quarrel had killed the King's son, and several of his friends; which raised the rage of Eric to the greatest height. Egill was taken prisoner and sent to the King: No sooner was he brought into the presence of the enraged Monarch, who had in his own mind doomed him to the severest tortures, than he began to sing a poem which he had composed in praise of the King's virtues, and conveyed his flattery in such sweet and soothing strains, that they procured him not only the forgiveness of all his crimes, but even the favour of his Prince.

There was a certain Scald in the court of Eric, King of Norway, who boasted that he could raise and inflame the human heart to any degree he pleased. The King, partly by promises and partly by threats, prevailed upon the Scald, much against his will, to make the same experiment on him and his courtiers. The Scald began by singing such mournful strains, and playing in such plaintive tones, that the whole company were overwhelmed with sorrow, and melted into tears: by and by he sang and

played such games and exhibiting arts, that they forgot their sorrows, and went to music, and dance, and sport, and gave every demonstration of the most unwarlike mind. At last changing his subject and tone, he turned from such mirth, merriment, and merry sports, that they were seized with the most frightful rage, and would have fallen by mutual wounds, if the pleasure of the social revel, had not rushed in and bound them: but, ultimately, when the King was overpowered, he killed as fewer than four of those around him.

150.—page 224. '*And scorned their weak foe.*'

"Alfred from his retreat in Selwood Forest, sent word to all his friends where he was, to the end that they might come and consult what was to be done at this juncture. After he had conferred with them, he gave them orders to draw together small bodies of troops, which at a minute's warning might be ready to join one another. The most difficult, as well as most important point was, to know exactly the posture of the enemy, that measures might be concerted accordingly. Alfred, not knowing whom to pitch upon for this necessary service, took the boldest resolution that ever entered into the thoughts of a Prince; which was, to go, in some assumed character, into the Danish camp, and there to be informed, by his own eyes, of the strength and condition of the enemy. To this end, having disguised himself as a harper, as if he got his livelihood by playing on that instrument, he entered fearlessly into the Danish camp, where he stayed several days, observing every thing which he wanted to know. Amongst other things he took notice, that whereas the Danes were wont to encamp and intrench themselves on a hill, they had neglected to do so now. They had not so much as placed any advanced guards to secure the avenues to their camp, believing that they had nothing to fear from an enemy, which, in despair, had fled the field."—*Rapin*.

151.—page 227. '*Screen me in this dark hour.*'

Alfred appears to have been as devout as his mind was elevated, and free from the superstition which characterized the age. To this quality *Asser* (his contemporary and friend) bears ample testimony, and records that the King had formed a collection of the devout offices of the day, with prayers and psalms adapted to pious meditations, and that he always carried this treasure in his bosom, for perpetual use.

152.—page 229. '*Some favoured fair.*'

All the northern nations were remarkable for the respect they paid their women. A young man had no chance of being favourably received as a suitor, until he had distinguished himself in battle, and rendered himself famous for his proficiency in manual exercises. The following is the complaint of Harold, translated from an old Icelandic Poem:

1. My ship had sailed round the isle of Sicily. Then were we all magnificent and splendid. My brown vessels, full of warriors, rapidly skimmed along the waves. Eager for the fight, I thought my sails could never slacken. And yet a Russian maid disdains me.

2. I fought in my youth with the inhabitants of Drontheim. They had troops superior in number. Dreadful was the conflict. Young as I was,

I left their young King dead in the fight. And yet a Russian maid disdains me.

3. One day we were but sixteen on ship-board : a tempest arose and swelled the ocean. The waves filled the loaded vessel : but we diligently cleared it. Thence I formed the brightest hopes. And yet a Russian maid disdains me.

4. I know how to perform eight exercises. I fight with courage. I keep a firm seat on horseback. I am skilled in swimming. I glide along the ice on skates. I excel in darting the lance. I am dexterous at the oar. And yet a Russian maid disdains me.

5. What tender maid or widow can deny, that in the morning, when, posted near the city in the south, we joined battle; can deny that I bravely wielded my arms; or that I left not behind me lasting monuments of my valour. And yet a Russian maid disdains me.

6. I was born in the Uplands of Norway, where the inhabitants handle so well the bow. Now I make my ships, the dread of peasants, rush among the rocks of the sea. Far from the abode of men I have ploughed the wide ocean with my vessels. And yet a Russian maid disdains me.

In the preceding poem, Harold mentions eight exercises, but enumerates only six. If the Reader be inquisitive to know what those are, which he has omitted, he may collect them from the following ancient Runic verses; wherein a northern hero is introduced boasting of himself:—

I am master of nine accomplishments. I play well at *Chess*. I know how to engrave Runic letters. I am apt at my book; and know how to handle the tools of a smith. I traverse the snow on skates of wood. I excel in shooting with the bow; and in managing the oar. I sing to the harp; and composes verses.”

Pontoppidan says, “King Olof of Tryggeson was stronger, more alert and nimble than any man of his time. He would climb the rock Smalserhorn, and fix his shield on the top of it. He would walk without the boat on the oars while the men were rowing. He would play with three darts at once; tossing them up in the air, and always keeping two up, while one was down in his hand. He was ambi-dexter, and could use his weapon with both hands, and throw two javelins at once. He excelled all men in shooting with the bow: and in swimming he had no equal.”

153.—page 230. ‘*A Harper and a Saxon! Bid him in.*’

“All the Gothic Nations attached great reverence to the character of the Bard or Minstrel, (often familiarly called Harper.) The person of the Bard was esteemed so sacred, that opposing armies suspended their conflicts at his presence: His evidence was preferred to any other, from a persuasion of his rectitude, whilst subsistence was granted to him wherever he journeyed, and his company was eagerly sought. He was forbidden, under severe penalties, to bear arms; to satirize, or to be immoral: he was to interfere in no dispute: a naked sword was never to be held in his presence; and his duty was to reform manners, to secure peace, and to celebrate the praises of the good and valiant.”—*Williams's Institutional Triades*.

Notwithstanding the pacific principles of the Bards, in some turbulent seasons, they contributed to obtain victories, which they afterwards sung. Ineurin, “the Monarch of the Bards,” was in the battle of Cattraeth.

Lhywarch Hen, and Myrzin were warriors, as was Melir. The best songs of Taliessu commemorated warlike exploits.

But though the character of the Minstrel was thus generally respected, if an old Chronicler can be credited, there was a spot, where, at one time, he was treated not quite with the usual deference. "After Kenneth Kein, (King of Scotland,) reigned Eugenius, the fourth of that name. He was a just and verteous Prince, and instructed in his youth by the holy man Colme. He commanded all Iugglers, *Mynstrels*, Scoffers, and such like idle vagabonds, eyther to anoyde his lande, or else to finde some honest craft or occupation to lyue by."—*Grafton*.

154.—page 230. '*The lamp, dim burning blue.*'

Camden strangely mentions that "When the tomb of Constantine was discovered at York, upon opening it, a lamp was discovered, *still burning*;" and continues to say, that "The ancients possessed the art of dissolving gold in fat liquor, and of so preparing it, that if undisturbed, it would continue to burn for ages." *Weaver*, also (Fun Mon.) mentions, that 'at Coggeshall, in Essex, an urn was discovered by some labourers, covered with Roman tile, which being removed, a burning lamp was discovered, that soon became extinguished, on exposure to the air.'

155.—page 233. '*Sacrifice—pleasing the Gods.*'

Human Sacrifices were common in Scandinavia, and the value of the offering depended on the quality of the victim. Harold the first of Norway, sacrificed his two Sons to his Idols, that he might obtain from them such a storm as should disperse the fleet advancing against him from Denmark.

156.—page 233. '*And Surtur's desolating reign draw near.*'

Surtur, the adversary of Odin, was supposed to live in a burning world, called Muspelsheim; ordained at some distant time to break loose and destroy the father of the gods. This event is thus sublimely described in the *Edda*. "There will come a time, a barbarous age, an age of the sword, when iniquity shall infest the earth, when brothers shall stain themselves with brothers' blood, and when sons shall be the murderers of their fathers, and fathers of their sons, when incest and adultery shall be common, when no man shall spare his friend. Immediately shall succeed a desolating winter; the snow shall fall from the four quarters of the world, the winds shall blow with fury, the whole earth shall be fettered with ice. Three such winters shall pass away without being softened by one summer. Then shall succeed astonishing prodigies. Then shall the monsters break their chains and escape: the great dragon shall roll himself in the ocean, and with his motions the whole earth shall be overflowed: the earth shall be shaken; the trees shall be torn up by the roots; the rocks shall be dashed against each other. The wolf Fenris, broken loose from his chains, shall open his enormous mouth, which reaches from heaven to earth, the fire shall flash out from his eyes and nostrils; he shall devour the sun: and the great dragon, who follows him, shall vomit forth upon the waters and into the air, great torrents of venom. In this confusion the stars shall fly from their places. The heavens shall cleave asunder, and the army of evil genii and giants, con-

ducted by black Surtur, and followed by Lok, shall break in to attack the gods: when Heimdal the door-keeper of the gods, rises up, he sounds his clanging trumpet! The gods awake and assemble; the great ash tree shakes its branches; heaven and earth are full of horror and affright. The gods fly to arms; the heroes place themselves in battle-array. Odin appears armed in his golden casque, and his resplendent cuirass; his vast scymitar is in his hand. He attacks the wolf Fenris, but is devoured by him! and the wolf perishes at the same moment. Thor is suffocated in the floods of venom which the dragon breathes forth as he expires. Lok and Heimdal mutually kill each other. The fire consumes all things, and the flame reaches up to heaven. But presently afterwards, a new earth springs forth from the bosom of the waves, adorned with green meadows; and the fields there spring forth without culture, calamities are there unknown, a palace is there raised more shining than the sun, all covered with gold. This is the place that the just will inhabit, and enjoy delights for evermore. Then the powerful, the valiant, and he who governs all things, comes forth from his lofty abodes to render divine justice. He pronounces decrees. He establishes the sacred destinies which will endure for ever. There is an abode remote from the sun, the gates of which face the north; poison rains there through a thousand openings. This place is all composed of the carcasses of serpents. There run certain torrents, in which are plunged, perjurers, assassins, and seducers. A black-winged dragon flies incessantly around, and devours the bodies of the wretched who are there imprisoned."

157—page 234. '*Brag.*'

Brag was the god of eloquence, and the greatest "of the Scalds, or Poets."

158.—page 234. '*When the white smoke-frost rose.*'

In the most northern latitudes, a white smoke is observed sometimes to arise between the fissures in the ice, so intensely cold as to peel the skin of any person who approaches it. It is known by the name of *smoke-frost*.

159—page 235. '*Sending our feats, down to posterity.*'

Inscriptions are still to be found on some of the highest rocks of Scandinavia, left there by the warriors of former ages, commemorating their exploits. The inscription is well known that the second Roman Legion, (Augusta) left on a perpendicular rock, near Brampton, in Cumberland.

160—page 236. '*Shall the young Hubba blush to own his sire?*'

No nation ever extolled more the feats of their ancestors than the Danes, or were more jealous of their children's reputation. When the famous Siward, the Dane, heard that his son was slain in battle, he earnestly enquired whether the fatal wounds were before or behind, and being told they were all before, he exclaimed, in a transport of joy: "Now I am perfectly happy. That was a death worthy of me and my son."

161.—page 239. '*For there disguised stood Alfred.*'

'But Alfred, the very mirror of Princes, more minding the wealth of his subjects, than the majesty of state, disguised himself in the habit of a common Minstrel, and in person repaired to the Danes' Campe, who lay wallowing in wantonness, and secure in their own conceits from impeachment of danger, which Alfred, a most skillfull musician, and an excellent poet, did not a little egge on by his sweet musick, and songs of valour, so that he was suffered to passe uncontrouled into the company of their princess, at banquets, or elsewhere, whereby he both saw their negligent security, and by diligent observance, learned their designs that in their counsels they intended.'—*Speed.* (Note C.)

162.—page 241. '*Thy Captive of no common origin.*'

It was a maxim with the Danes, that, the more noble the victim, the greater the probability of pleasing the gods.

163.—page 242. '*Fighting I found her not.*'

When the Danes were going to join battle, they raised loud shouts, they clashed their arms, they invoked with a great noise the name of Odin, and sometimes sang hymns in his praise. The Danes made an intrenchment with their baggage round the camp, where the women and children remained during the engagement.

164.—page 243. '*If still he slept, the monster.*'

Calcutta was taken from the English by Nabob Surajah Dowla, in the year 1756. As soon as it was dark, the British prisoners, to the number of 146, were directed by the Jemindars, who guarded them, to collect themselves together into one body, and sit down quietly under the arched Veranda or Piazza, to the westward of the *Black-hole Prison*. Besides the guard over them, another was placed at the south-end of this Veranda, to prevent the escape of any of them. About five hundred gun-men, with lighted matches, were drawn up on the parade, and soon after the factory was in flames to the right and left of the prisoners, who had various conjectures on this appearance. The fire advanced with rapidity on both sides; and it was the prevailing opinion of the English, that they were to be suffocated between the two fires; on this they soon came to the resolution of rushing on the guard, seizing their scymitars, and attacking the troops on the parade, rather than be thus tamely roasted to death: but Mr. Holwell, the governor, advanced and found the men were only searching for a place to confine them in. Soon after the guard approached and ordered the prisoners to rise up and go into the barracks. Then, with their muskets presented, they ordered them to go into the *Black-hole Prison*; while others with clubs and scymitars, pressed upon them so strongly, that there was no resisting it; but like one agitated wave impelling another, they were obliged to give way and enter, the rest following like a torrent. It was about eight o'clock in the evening when these 146 unhappy Englishmen, exhausted by continual action and fatigue, were thus crammed together into a dungeon about eighteen feet square, in a close sultry night in Bengal; shut up to the east and south, the only quarters from whence air could reach them, by high walls, and by a wall and door

to the north, open only to the west by two windows strongly barred with iron. They had been but a few minutes confined, before every one fell into a perspiration, so profuse, that no one can form an idea of it. This brought on a raging thirst, which increased in proportion as the body was drained of its moisture. Various expedients were thought of to give more room and air. Every hat was put in motion; they several times sat down on their hams, but at each time several of the poor creatures fell, and were instantly suffocated or trod to death. Before nine o'clock every man's thirst grew intolerable, and respiration difficult. Efforts were again made to force the door; but still in vain. Water! water! became now the general cry. Some water was thrown in at the windows, but these supplies only served to raise and feed the flames. The confusion became general and horrid, from the cries and ravings for water, and many were trampled to death. This scene of misery proved entertainment to the brutal wretches without, who supplied them with water, that they might have the satisfaction of seeing them fight for it, as they phrased it; and held up lights to the bars, that they might lose no part of the inhuman diversion. Before eleven o'clock, most of the gentlemen were dead, and one-third of the whole. Thirst grew more intolerable. By half-past eleven, most of the living were in an outrageous delirium. They found that water heightened their uneasiness, and, air! air! was the general cry. Every insult and opprobrious name was used, to provoke the guards to fire upon them; and every man had eager hopes of meeting the first shot. Still others expired. About two in the morning, they crowded so violently to the windows, that many died standing, unable to fall by the throng and equal pressure round. When the day arrived, the stench arising from the dead bodies was insufferable. One of the guards, more humane or more avaricious than the rest, had been prevailed upon twice during the night, to go to the residence of the Nabob to inform him of the wretched state of the English prisoners; but he as often returned and said, that his Highness was asleep *and he dared not wake him*. The Nabob awoke about six, and being told of the state of the prisoners, he directed that they might be brought out of their prison, when the poor remains of 146 souls, being only *twenty-three*, came out alive, emaciated and in a high fever. The dead were soon after thrown into a ditch, and the Sultan concerned himself no more on the subject. Calcutta was retaken the year after by Admiral Watson and Colonel Clive, when Surajah Dowla, the afore-mentioned Nabob, was put to death.—*Narrative of Powell, one of the sufferers.*

165.—page 245. '*Slept less than Heimdal.*'

Heimdal was called "the God with the Golden Teeth," because his teeth were of that metal. He dwells, it is said, at the end of the bridge Bifrost, or the Rainbow, in a castle called "the Celestial Fort." He is the centinel or watchman of the gods. The post assigned to him, is to abide at the entry into heaven, to prevent the giants from forcing their way over the bridge; as the gods constantly feared the assault of the giants. Heimdal sleeps less than a bird, and sees, by night as well as by day, more than a hundred leagues round him. So acute is his ear, that he hears the grass growing on the earth, and the wool on the sheep's back. Besides all this, he has a trumpet which is heard through all the

world. He is celebrated in the following verses :—"The Celestial Fort is the castle where Heimdal resideth, that sacred guardian of heaven, who drinketh divine hydromel, in the secure and tranquil palaces of the gods."—*North, Antiq.*

166.—page 247. '*Which I in mournful mood to Frida spake.*'

The most celebrated female names amongst the Danes were, Nossæ, Siona, Loona, Vara, Vora, Synia, and Lyna. These were all goddesses. Other goddesses were called Valkyries, whom Odin sent into the fields of battle to make choice of those who were to be slain, and to bestow the victory. Rista and Mista were the principal, although Gudur, Rosta, and Shulda, were sent occasionally to choose the dead, and to regulate what carnage should ensue.

167.—page 250. '*The squirrel that at leisure rasped his nuts.*'

'There are three creatures that live chiefly on the hazel-nut, the squirrel, the field-mouse, and the bird called the nuthatch; and yet they open them each in a different way. The squirrel, after *rasping* off the small end, splits the shell in two with his long fore-teeth, as a man does with his knife; the field-mouse nibbles a hole with his teeth, as regular as if drilled with a wimble, and yet so small, that one would wonder how the kernel could be extracted through it; whilst the nuthatch pecks an irregular ragged hole with his bill, but as this artist has no paws to hold the nut firm while he pierces it, like an adroit workman, he fixes it, as it were, in a vice, in some cleft of a tree, or in some crevice, when standing over it, he perforates the stubborn shell. While at work, they make a rapping noise, that may be heard at a considerable distance.'—*White's Selborne.*

168.—page 251. '*I am an aged man.*'

Several instances of great longevity occurred in England about this time, as cited by *Ingulfus*. When the famous Turketul, who had been chancellor of England, and one of the greatest warriors and statesmen of his time, retired from the world, and became abbot of Croyland, he found five very aged monks in that monastery, to whom he paid particular attention. Father Clarenbald, the oldest of these monks, died A.D. 973, after he had completed the 168th year of his age. The second, who was named Father Swarling, died the same year, at the age of 142. The third, who was called Father Turgar, died the year after, in the 115th year of his age. The two other monks, Brune and Ajo, died about the same time, whose ages were not exactly known, although they must have been very old, as they both remembered the old abbey of Croyland, which had been destroyed by the Danes in the year 870. *Olaus Magnus* speaks of a Bishop of St. David's, who died about this time, aged 160 years.

169.—page 258. '*Restless as wandering Jew.*'

Matthew of Paris, remarks that, In the year 1228, there came an Armenian arch-bishop into England, to visit the shrines and reliques preserved in our churches, who being entertained at the monastery of St. Alban's, was asked several questions relating to his country. Amongst

the rest, a monk who sat near him inquired if he had ever seen or heard of the famous person named Joseph, that was so much talked of, who was present at our Lord's crucifixion, and conversed with him, and who was still alive. The arch-bishop answered, that the assertion was true. One of the arch-bishop's train told them, in French, that his lord knew the person they spoke of very well; that he dined at his table a little while before he left the east, and that he had been Pontius Pilate's porter, by name Cartaphilus; who, when they were dragging Jesus Christ out of the door of the judgment Hall, struck him with his fist on the back, saying, 'Go faster, Jesus, go faster; why dost thou linger?' Upon which Jesus looked at him with a frown, and said, 'I indeed am going, but thou shalt tarry till I come.' Soon afterwards he was converted, and baptized by the name of Joseph. He always lives, but at the end of every hundred years falls into a fit of extreme illness, and at length into a fit of ecstacy, out of which, when he recovers, he returns to the same state of youth he was in before Jesus suffered, being then about thirty years. He remembers all the circumstances of the death and resurrection of Christ; the saints that arose with him; the composing of the apostle's creed, their preaching and dispersion, and is himself a very grave and holy person.' *Matthew of Paris* was a monk at St. Alban's, at the time this narrative was given.

170.—page 267. '*By all the Gods you worship.*'

The Danes having several times violated the Christian oath, Alfred compelled them to swear by their own gods, supposing that such an oath would be more likely to bind them; the success was, however, the same.

171.—page 270. '*Danes like the Assi tremble.*'

Name given to the people of the south, who were believed to be all cowards, and for whom the Danes entertained the greatest contempt.

172.—page 272. '*Tulba my brother.*'

Tulba, the brother of Ivar and Hubba, was slain at the destroying of the monastery of Peterborough. (See Note 206.)

173.—page 277. '*A contest fitly named man's battle.*'

After the Moors, or Moors, had conquered Spain, in order to subjugate the rest of Europe, they crossed the Pyrenees, with an immense force, under the command of Abderame. They had overrun great part of the Kingdom of France when they were met by Charles Martel, son of Pepin, (A.D. 732.) with a large and gallant army, between Tours and Poitiers. A furious and bloody contest commenced, during which the whole civilized world might be said to have lain in suspense. For six days the battle lasted, when Abderame being slain, the Infidels fled before the victorious Franks; and such was their overthrow, that the Saracens never again attempted the conquest of France. Had it not been for this signal, and, to the Christian, providential defeat, (as Gibbon expresses it) "The interpretation of the Koran might now be teaching in the schools of Oxford, and her pulpits be demonstrating to a circumcised people, the sanctity and truth of the revelation of Mahomet."

174.—page 278. *'His monstrous hand—on some great continent.'*

"The Island of Nordstrand, on the coast of Denmark, formerly contained twenty-two parishes, and by its extraordinary fertility abounded with cattle and corn, but in the year 1634, a furious storm arose, in which the tempestuous ocean arose to an unexampled height, and swept almost every thing from the surface of the Island. In this terrible calamity, 6408 men, women, and children were drowned; 1332 houses were levelled with the ground, and 50,000 head of cattle washed into the sea. The smaller Island of Eiderstedt, adjoining, shared the same fate; 664 houses having been blown down, and 2107 persons drowned, together with 6738 cattle. Of all Nordstrand, nothing is now remaining but the small parish of Pelworm, which owed its safety to the height of its situation."—*Busching*.

No country has sustained more devastations from the breaking down of dams, and the consequent irruptions of the sea, than Holland. In the year 1446, a dam broke at Dort, when one hundred thousand persons lost their lives; and in the year 1570, a similar disaster happened, when a dyke broke, and the sea rushing in, overflowed a large tract of country, drowning the inhabitants of whole districts, and on which occasion four hundred thousand persons lost their lives. "In the 11th century, a terrible inundation of the sea happened, which irremediably drowned great part of Flanders and the Low Countries. Previously to this disaster, Zealand consisted of fifteen Islands, but on this inroad of the ocean, eight of them were swallowed up by the sea, and totally lost."—*Hasted's Kent*.

175.—page 280. *'Vafthrudinis.'*

A Danish giant remarkable for his wisdom.

176.—page 280. *'Fear not the giants less than I the foe.'*

A perpetual animosity subsisted between the Scandinavian gods and giants. The giants were supposed to ascend to the gods by means of the rainbow, which was called the bridge of the gods, to prevent which, at the foot of the rainbow was erected a fort, called "The celestial fort," and which was entrusted to the god Heimdall. (See Note 165.)

177.—page 283. *'I would as soon my father's bones dishonour.'*

The Danes venerated the tombs of their ancestors, amongst whom it was a common observation "A monument is seldom erected to any man but by his own Son." "No Son, no Tomb."

The bones of Kings are rarely allowed permanently to repose in peace. The remains of many of our own monarchs have partaken of this mutability, but none more so than those of William the Conqueror. With that desire for a quiet and last resting-place, which is natural to the human mind, and for which, in contemplative moments, the Greatest of Earth's Children often, solicitously provide, William erected, in his own patrimonial town of *Caen*, in *Normandy*, a splendid Abbey, of noble architecture, and dedicated it to *St. Stephen*. He built his Church for the purpose of receiving his own mortal remains and those of his Queen; and at the same time richly endowed it, that prayers might be offered up therein (according to the popish custom) for the repose of thain souls, to the end of time.

On the decease of the Conqueror, William Rufus raised, just before the high altar, a most splendid monument for his Father, richly decorated with gold, silver, and diamonds. The top stone was supported on each side by three pillars of white marble, whereon lay the figure of the King, as large as life, dressed in his Royal robes.

In this state it quietly remained from 1087 till 1522, when a Cardinal and several Arch-bishops visiting Caen, they prevailed on the Diocesan Bishop to allow the tomb of William to be opened. Upon removing the cover stone, the Body (which was corpulent, and in stature greatly exceeding the tallest man then known) appeared *as entire as when it was at first buried*. Within the tomb lay a copper plate, gilt, on which was engraved a duplicate of the external epitaph.

The Cardinal being surprised at finding the body in so perfect a state, after an interment of four hundred and fifty years, in order to *perpetuate* the memory of so remarkable an incident, procured an exact painting to be taken of the Royal Remains, and caused it to be hung up in the Church. The tomb having been then carefully inclosed remained in that state, till the year 1562, when, during the religious dissensions of the times, the victorious party broke into the Church, and with the expectation of obtaining treasure, from William the Conqueror's tomb, they forced it open, but not finding the booty they expected, they vented their spleen by wantonly throwing the Royal bones about the Church! (a decay of the body having rapidly, as usual, followed the introduction of the air.) They destroyed also the superb monument, without in the least sparing the Royal Effigies. Most of the bones were afterwards collected by Monsieur De Bras, and delivered into the hands of the Bailly of the Abbey, who carefully lodged them in his cell, intending to restore them to their ancient place of sepulture, as soon as the troubles were ended, but the town being taken some time after by Admiral Chastellion, the Religious were driven from their abbey, and the remains were once more promiscuously dispersed. The Viscount De Falaise, at this time, obtained from the rioters one of the thigh bones of the King, and with due veneration deposited it again in the mutilated tomb. Monsieur De Bras, declared that this thigh bone was longer by the breadth of his four fingers, than that of the tallest man he had ever seen.

About the same time the picture of the Conqueror's remains, as they appeared lying in the tomb in the year 1522, fell into the hands of Peter Hode, gaoler of Caen, who converted one part of it into a table, and used the other as a cupboard door, but these; four years after, were reclaimed by Monsieur De Bras, in whose possession they remained, till his death, since which time it is unknown what is become of them.

Ducarel, who gives the substance of the preceding note (*Anglo Norm. Antiq.*) has published in his work, engravings of the whole of the Bayeux Tapestry, and which, for antiquarian knowledge, is a fortunate circumstance, as it is understood that the original was destroyed during the storms of the Revolution. (See No. 69.)

The warning voice of the dead Conqueror not being now to be heard from the Tomb of the Great William, "breathed" "either soft or loud," the world may derive instruction, equally impressive and salutary from the Epitaph of his descendant Edward the Black Prince, in Canterbury Cathedral.

" Whoso thou be that passeth by;
 Where these Corpse entomb'd lie :
 Understand what I shall say,
 As at this time speak I may.
 Such as thou art, sometime was I,
 Such as I am, such shalt thou be.
 I little thought on th' hour of death
 So long as I enjoyed breath,
 Great riches here I did possess,
 Whereof I made great nobleness,
 I had gold, silver, wardrobes, and
 Great treasure, horses, houses, land,
 But now a Caitiff, poor am I,
 Deep in the ground, lo here I lie.
 My beauty great is all quite gone,
 My flesh is wasted to the bone.
 My House is narrow now and strong,
 Nothing but truth comes from my tongue ;
 And if you should see me this day,
 I do not think but ye would say
 That I had never been a man ;
 So much altered now I am."

Weaver's Funeral Monuments.

178.—page 283. '*Vengeful King.*'

This, and the preceding, are some of the many titles applied to Odin.

179.—page 284. '*The Raven flaps his wings.*'

The Danes believed that there was a secret virtue in this standard, which Ivar and Hubba's sisters had wrought with their own hands, miraculously. They believed that, before a battle, the raven flapped his wings, in token of victory, or otherwise hung down his head as a presage of defeat.

180.—page 290. '*Jomsburg is my home.*'

The love of a violent death, and an insensibility to danger, were remarkable features in the character of the Danes. "Harold, King of Denmark, founded on the coasts of Pomerania, a city named Jomsburg ; where he sent a colony of young Danes, and bestowed the government on a celebrated warrior named Palnatoka. This new Lycurgus had made of that city a second Sparta, and every thing was directed to this single end—to make complete warriors. Bartholinus, who has left us the history, assures us, that it was forbidden there so much as to mention the word fear, even in the most imminent danger. No citizen of Jomsburg was to yield to any number, however great, but to fight intrepidly without flying. The sight of present and inevitable death, would have been no excuse with them for making the least complaint. Palnatoka seemed to have eradicated from their minds all traces of that feeling so natural and so universal, which makes men think of their destruction not without horror. Some of these inhabitants of Jomsburg, having made an irruption into the territories of a powerful Norwegian Lord, named Haquin, were overcome

in spite of the obstinacy of their resistance, and the most distinguished among them being made prisoners, were, according to the customs of those times, condemned to death. The first who was led to punishment was content to say, without changing countenance, and without expressing the least sign of fear. "Why should not the same happen to me which did to my father? He died and so must I." A warrior, named Thorchill, who was to cut off the head of the second, having asked him what he felt at the sight of death, he answered, "That he remembered too well the laws of Jomsburg, to utter any words that denoted fear." The third in reply to the same question, said, "He rejoiced to die with glory, and that he preferred such a death to an infamous death like that of Torchill." The fourth made an answer more extraordinary. "I suffer with a good heart, and the present hour is to me very agreeable, I only beg of you, (addressing himself to Thorchill) to be very quick in cutting off my head; for it is a question often debated by us at Jomsburg, whether one retains any sense after being beheaded. I will therefore grasp this knife in my hand; if after my head is cut off, I strike towards you, it will shew I have not lost all sense: if I let it drop, it will be a proof to the contrary. Make haste therefore and decide the dispute." Thorchill, adds the historian, cut off his head in a most expeditious manner, but the knife, as might be expected, dropped from his hand. The fifth showed the same tranquillity, and died rallying and jeering his enemies. The sixth begged of Thorchill, that he might not be led to death like a sheep, "Strike the blow in my face," said he, "I will sit still without shrinking; and take notice whether I once wink my eyes, or betray one sign of fear in my countenance. For we inhabitants of Jomsburg are used to exercise ourselves in trials of this sort, so as to meet the stroke of death without once moving." He kept his promise before all the spectators, and received the blow without the least sign of fear. "The seventh," says the historian, "was a very beautiful young man. His long fair hair, as fine as silk, floated in curls and ringlets on his shoulders. Thorchill asked him what he thought of death? "I receive it willingly," said he, "since I have fulfilled the greatest duty of life, and have seen all those put to death whom I would not survive. I only beg of you one favour," said he, "do not let my hair be touched by a slave, or stained with my blood."—*Mallet*.

181.—page 291. '*The name of Eddington.*'

"Alfred, after assembling his troops, with the greatest alacrity, presently charged the Danes at Eddington, (in Wiltshire). Through the greatness of their numbers, they a long time sustained the utmost of the King's power, yet he at length prevailed against them, and that with so great a slaughter, as if that field alone had been appointed for the recompense of all the bloody and inhuman cruelties they had before committed in the land."—*Spelman*.

182.—page 291. '*Crown this our lovely Isle.*'

"After Alfred had subdued the Danes, he employed himself in cultivating the arts of peace, and in repairing the mischiefs which the ravages of the enemy had done in his country. Those pirates had burnt or demolished all public buildings, churches or monasteries wherever they came, and it is almost incredible what a number of these he rebuilt, besides the new

ones of *Hye*, *Athelney*, and *Shaftsbury*, which he founded. All the great towns and the cities in the kingdom had suffered in like manner, and were in a miserable condition; scarce fit either for defence or habitation. These he repaired; adorned them with noble structures of squared stone, and strengthened them with good fortifications. *London*, in particular, rose by his munificence, out of the ruins and desolation, in which the Danes had left it, and being soon reepeople by his encouragement, it flourished exceedingly. It was now fortified too well to dread the insults of the Danes, and it was probably the advantage of its situation, which determined Alfred to fix on it for the place of the ordinary assemblies of the states of his realms; which he appointed to be there held twice a year; thereby declaring it to be the Metropolis of England.”
—*Carte*.

183.—page 300. ‘*Direct the rude and train the ignorant.*’

Alfred thus expresses himself in a letter to Wulfleg, Bishop of London. “I must inform you my dear friend, that I often revolve in my mind on the many wise and learned men who formerly flourished in the English nation, both among the Clergy and Laity. How happy were these times! Then the Princes governed their subjects with great wisdom, according to the word of God, and became famous for their wise and upright administration. Then the Clergy were equally diligent in reading, studying, and teaching; and this country was so famous for learning, that many came hither from foreign parts to be instructed. Then (before all was spoiled and burnt) the churches and monasteries were filled with libraries of excellent books, in several languages. When I reflect on this, I sometimes wonder that those learned men, who were spread all over England, had not translated the best of these books into their native tongue. But then I presently answered myself, that those wise men could never have imagined, that learning would become so much neglected as to make this necessary, but believed that the more languages were understood, the more learning would abound in any country.”—*Spelman*. (See also Note No. 117.)

184.—page 300. ‘*In science fair, and all ennobling arts.*’

The extraordinary talent which Alfred discovered in Naval Architecture, has been mentioned in a previous Note (121.) He also surpassed all his predecessors and contemporaries in the erection of royal palaces, as well as in the building of towns and cities; on some occasions destroying those which were built of wood, to erect others of stone. All the arts then known were so encouraged by Alfred, that he obtained numerous artists from all the kingdoms in Europe, toward whose remuneration he appropriated (*Asser* says) the one-sixth part of his income. Amongst other arts, he particularly encouraged workers in gold. One specimen of this particular art has been brought down to the present time. An amulet of gold, designed to hang round the neck, most curiously wrought, was found in the Isle of Ethelney, on which appeared the Saxon inscription, *Alfred ordered me to be made*. It was preserved in the Ashmolean, and is now transferred to the British Museum. An engraving of this curious amulet, with further particulars respecting it, may be found in *Camden*. *Asser*

further says of Alfred, 'He built houses good and majestic, beyond all the precedents of his ancestors, by his new mechanical inventions.'

At this period, no artificer was held in higher repute, by the Saxons and Welsh, than the *Smith*. The King's Smith, in the latter kingdom, sat in the royal palace, next to the Domestic chaplain, and was entitled to a draft of each kind of liquor which was brought into the hall.

185.—page 301. '*The lofty barrow.*'

The old English Chronicle, called, "Brute of England," says, "When Hungar (Ivar) and Hubba died thei bare theym to a mountayne ther bysydc, and made upon theym a logge (Barrow) and letta call it Hubbalugh, and so it is to this day in Debenashir." Though this mount is now swept away by the sea, *Dr. Borlase* says, the place, on the strand near Appledore in Devonshire, where it once stood, is still known by the name of *Whibblestow*.

Oral Traditions are still current in the North of Devonshire respecting the conflict of the Saxons with Hubba and the Danes, "Hubba's Point" is by the side of the River Torridge, between Appledore and Biddeford, on the east side of the river. "Bloody Corner" is between Hubba's Point and Northam, and "Bone Hill" is not far from Northam Church, where there had been a great slaughter of the Danes. Nor are the traditional memorials of the Danes confined to this district, according to the statement of the 'SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT OF THE MORNING CHRONICLE, in the valuable statistics given lately in that Journal on Labour and the Poor, records of the Danes are still retained in the County of Durham. [Letter 24, January 9, 1850,] where it is stated—"All this district "abounds with Scandinavian memorials. *Thorsgill*, that is Thor's Vale, "or Valley; *Thoragillbeck*, the brook flowing through it; *Thorsby*, or "Thoresby, the dwelling of Thor; *Balders Beck*, or Brook are found "within it, recalling times when *Odin* ruled the popular faith, and testifying to the worship of ancient Deities."

186.—page 302. '*A mountain, by apparent magic reared.*'

Tumuli were often formed over those who had been slain in battle, by the surviving soldiers carrying their helmets full of earth, and continuing by these small means, till often considerable hills were formed. Some who have not been aware of this practice have expressed surprise that artificial hills should be formed, on a plain, without exhibiting any excavations, from whence the earth could have been taken.—See *Dr. Skutely*.

187.—page 305. '*The midnight murderer spirits brave abhor.*'

The Danes had a sort of morality among themselves. They held it dishonourable to attack an enemy by night.

188.—page 306. '*Another Offa's treachery.*'

"At the close of Offa's reign Ethelbert, possessed the crown of East Anglia, a peaceful and intelligent Prince in the bloom of youth, interesting in his manners, and virtuous in his disposition. Invited, or welcomed by Offa, he repaired to Mercia, for the purpose of receiving the hand of the Princess Etheldritha. His splendid retinue became his own dignity.

and was a pleasing homage to the merit of his betrothed. Offa received him with that distinction which was due to the allotted husband of his daughter. The heart of the Princess acknowledged the merit of the accomplished Ethelbert, when the bands of love were suddenly rent asunder: Ethelbert was assassinated. The Father of his beloved was the murderer. Though Offa had pledged his protection, had received the King of East Anglia as his guest, had introduced him to his daughter, as her approved husband, and the nuptial feast had begun, Offa procured his destruction (by forcing him down a well.) The favourable moment for annexing East-Angli to Mercia, was a temptation which overpowered the feelings of the father and the man.

"Did such a complication of crimes benefit the perpetrator? Before two years elapsed, this man, who from ambition had plunged into the most hopeless guilt, was hurried from his empire to his grave. Remorse, with her never-dying pang, embittered all the interval. His daughter, whom he had wedded to misery the most agonizing, abandoned his court, fled into the marshes of Croyland, and pined away her life in mourning solitude. His Queen, the evil counsellor of his ambition, perished miserably. The husband of another of his daughters was cut off in the same year as himself; the other who married Brithric, died a martyr to vice and penury the most extreme, scorned and abhorred; and his son Egfrid, who in 794 succeeded him, was permitted to exist only 141 days. The race of Offa disappeared for ever, though his corroded memory has continued to exist. Such are the blessings of prosperity founded on vice!" —*Turner.*

189.—page 307.

‘Never have I slept
Beneath th’ inglorious roof,’

It was not uncommon for a Dane to boast, that he had never slept beneath an immovable roof, or drunk mead by his own fire side.

190.—page 311. ‘*That burnt the hostile fleet.*’

None of the Northern warriors gave Alfred more trouble than Hastings, although he had often been defeated by the King, who successively pursued him through almost every part of England.

"Hastings, to escape King Alfred, sailed from Devonshire and landed on the Eastern coast, at Beamsfleet, where being joined by a Danish army from Northumbria, he was attacked by Alfred and defeated. Hastings then fled to Shobury; where fearing the approach of the King, he marched his forces along the Thames, till he drew near the Severn; and still pursuing his flight arrived at Buttingdon, in Shropshire. Alfred did not allow him time to be reinforced, but, blocking up the place immediately, reduced the Danes to such extremity, that they were forced to eat their horses. Necessity and despair put them upon forcing their way through the English, and though they were defeated with great slaughter, many of them got off and escaped into East Anglia. There they raised a fresh body of forces, and being reinforced also, by the Northumbrians, they made a push to get into North Wales, marching night and day till they reached Chester, and with such expedition, that the King's army, though they cut off some stragglers, could not come up with them, till they had

entrenched themselves. It was not the time of the year for a siege, and the English contenting themselves with driving off the cattle, and carrying off all the provision in the neighbourhood, left them there to pass the winter.

"Hastings, with his followers, made a shift with some prey that they took in Wales, to subsist, though with much difficulty, through that season; but not daring either to await the English army, or to attempt a passage through Mercia, retired early in the spring into Northumbria, and from thence got back at last into the country of the East Angles (Essex), where they strongly entrenched themselves. Advancing at the latter end of the year toward the borders of Mercia, they took post at Hertford on the Lee. In this place Hastings erected two forts, one on each side of the river, for the security of his numerous ships which he had drawn up the stream; but Alfred coming up with his army, and viewing the nature of the ground, and the situation of the enemy's camp, he conceived and executed the bold adventure of turning the channel of the river, by which means the enemy's ships were left dry on a sudden. The Danes disheartened at this new kind of warfare, and at the kind of enemy they had to deal with, hereupon quitting their ships, (which became a prey to the King,) fled in all haste toward the Severn; and fortified themselves at Quatbridge, (probably Bridgenorth,) but were still pursued by Alfred. Thus hunted, distressed, disheartened, Hastings and his followers determined for ever to quit England, the scene of so many disasters, and retired once more into Northumbria, where they got shipping amongst their friends, and sailed over to Normandy."—*Carte*.

191 & 192.—page 322.

'Through ocean waves dart rapid.'

Some reckoned Lok in the number of the gods, others called him the "Calumniator of the gods, "The artificer of fraud," and "The torment of gods and men." He is represented as surpassing all beings "in that science which is called perfidy and cunning;" and though he has often exposed the gods to great perils, yet he has as often extricated them by his dexterous artifices. The thirteenth fable of the Edda describes the flight of Lok, and concealing himself as a Fish.

The Danes were admirable natural philosophers, that is, they were never at a loss for assigning causes, right or wrong, to all natural appearances, whilst occasionally their opinions were supported by something like grave, though rather bald induction. "When Hriegner, the giant, encountered Thor, he carried a lance made of a large whet-stone. Thor broke it in pieces, by a blow of his mallet, and made the splinters fly so far, that all the whet-stones found in the world, are parts of it, *as they evidently appear to have been broken off from something by violence.*"

194 & 195—page 400. 'Thirty brave chieftains stand.'

"Guthrum attended Alfred with thirty of the chieftest of his army; and divers others of the common soldiers came a short time after the King to the river (Thone) in Weadmore, and were there baptized, and both Guthrum and his new Christian company were entertained with much honour for the space of twelve days; to whom also, at their departure, Alfred pre-

sented, in a royal manner, gifts according to their occasion, and the present store he then had. To Guthrum, the King gave the whole of East Anglia."—*Sir John Spelman*.

196.—page 401. *'If from thy conscience, Guthrum.'*

The fidelity of Guthrum was confirmed by his loyal attachment to Alfred through the whole of his reign. Other pretended converts to Christianity were less steady in the profession they made. "Lewis Le Debonnair, Son of Charlemagne, attempted to convert all the Sea-Kings, or Northern Pirates that touched on his coast, on which occasion he loaded them with presents, but a surly exclamation of one of these pretended converts disclosed the true motives of the initiated. At one paschal solemnity the pretended penitents were so numerous that white dresses could not be procured for all the pagans, when some linen of the clergy was cut up, and sewed together to serve on the unexpected occasion. But when one of these garments was presented to one of the Northern Leaders, the son of Odin frowned with disdain, exclaiming, "This is the twentieth time that I have come to be 'washed, and I have hitherto always received the best 'white dresses; this vile apparel is fit only for an Herdsman: if I can 'have no better garment, I disdain your Christianity.'"—*Turner*.

196.—page 403. *'Reason may ask, and gratitude bestow.'*

"Alfred soon after he was established on his throne, made Ceolric Bishop of Winchester, the very Neatherd in whose house the king in his adversity was glad to hide himself. He found him a man of good wit, and parts capable of better employment; upon the return of his fortune therefore, he caused him to apply himself to learning, in which he so well answered the king's expectations, as that at last he made him a Bishop, and used to advise with him about the weightiest affairs of the state."—*Spelman*.

197.—page 404. *'Thou shalt be its Abbot.'*

Alfred rebuilt the Abbey of Wilton, after it had been destroyed by the Danes, and made Sigbert the Abbot.

198.—page 405.

Princes stand

Firmer, and most secure, when round them throng,
Good, and enlightened men!

Alfred rendered himself remarkable for the encouragement which he gave to learning. The most learned men of Europe flocked to his court, and were uniformly received with distinguished honours, as stated in previous Notes. Also in Note A. at the end.

199.—page 406. *'And all our race disheartened but for thee.'*

See Note B, at the end.

200.—page 410.

Our progeny, thinking of us their sires,
Will rise vindictive, and the invader's spear
Trample in dust, as we this day have done.'

After the defeat of Ivar and Hubba, other parties of Danes arrived in England, but they were constantly defeated by Alfred, who, in the latter part of his reign, enjoyed an uninterrupted peace, having by his valour as a general, and his talents as a legislator, raised his country to the highest pitch of happiness and glory; exhibiting, to the latest generations, how much, under the most discouraging circumstances, may be accomplished by a wise and good king.

Note A.

The geographical knowledge of our ancestors was very limited. Thus, 'Richard of Cirencester,' (one of the most enlightened men of his day) writes concerning Britain.—The shore of Gaul would be the boundary of the world, did not the island of Britain claim from its magnitude almost the appellation of another world, for if measured from the Caledonian promontory, it extends in length more than eight hundred miles.

On another occasion he remarks, 'Britain is situated almost under the North Pole.'

The same laborious topographer thus gravely purpurs his vocation.... 'The sea which flows between Britain and Hibernia is subject to storms, and according to *Solinus*, is navigable only during a few days in summer.'

This worthy Ecclesiastic of Cirencester flourished in the middle of the fourteenth century, whilst Alfred, in the ninth century, dissatisfied with loose and unsatisfactory reports respecting the state of the world, and the relative condition of nations, exhibited the restless feelings of a great mind, and perseveringly sought, from all possible sources, to obtain more accurate information, both on account of himself and subjects. It appears marvellous, for the age in which he lived, that he should have been able to acquire ideas, sufficiently accurate, of the spot, in the East Indies, where the Christians of St. Thomas dwelt, so as to project a mission, and to transmit to them supplies in their necessitous state. (See note p. 106.) His anxiety also to obtain information with respect to other countries, appears from another circumstance. *Ohthere*, a distinguished Norwegian traveller, having visited England, in the reign of Alfred, the king invited him to his court, at Wantage, and transcribed from his oral communication such an account of the North of Europe, as surpasses, in correct geographical knowledge, all the information on the subject which was acquired by Englishmen for several centuries afterward.

This voyage of *Ohthere* is a curious and valuable document, translated from the Saxon of Alfred, by the Hon. Daines Barrington—See *Harleian Miscellany*. Also note 107.

Note B.

It has been justly remarked, that the character of no man is fully developed who has not been placed in an elevated situation, where an ample scope was offered for the unfolding in his mind of whatever was good or bad; so that, in a prospective sense, great vices or virtues (as well as talents) may be concealed even from the possessor, in the absence of those circumstances which would call them into existence. On this principle, a good king stands in the first rank of human excellence; and where is

the monarch, ancient or modern, who, for the combination of all great qualities, can be compared with Alfred?

Cyrus, according to the opinion generally entertained, makes the nearest advance to him; but there is this striking difference between the two competitors for fame; the reputation of Alfred rests on firm and indisputable evidence; that of Cyrus (particularly the moral and intellectual parts of his character), on authority at once doubtful and contradictory. There is no man who would not desire that *all* were true which Rollin and others have written of the founder of the Median and Persian Empire, from the opportunity which would thus be offered of indulging the benevolent feeling of praise, without danger of excess; but the following extract (from *Bishop Cumberland's* able refutation of the claims to high antiquity of the Phœnician history, ascribed to Sanchoniathon) will satisfy the reader that Cyrus the Great, to a considerable extent, has hitherto been contemplated through an imperfect medium, and that he is entitled to hold no legitimate competition with our own immortal Alfred:

"The age of Cyrus falls hundreds of years within the period called 'Historical Time,' but how little do we know with certainty of his birth, life, or death? Three ancient Greek historians have undertaken to give the history of his life and actions; Herodotus, Ctesias, and Xenophon. None of them was far remote from Cyrus in time. Herodotus was born forty-five years after his death: Xenophon within one hundred: Ctesias was several years older than Xenophon. Every one of them had been in Persia; had opportunities of conversing with such as could give him the best information, and of searching records, and they are the only (original) authors who have written Cyrus's life." A summary of the account of each exhibits such a diversity in all the leading circumstances, that, (the Bishop continues) "it is impossible to think that each of these should be seriously delivered as the history of one and the same person." "Xenophon's is without doubt the truest account, for it agrees best with scripture, but he indulges his own fine imagination, in his book of the *Education of Cyrus*, without pretending that the whole is exact matter of fact."

The following characters of Alfred are from three different Historians, confirming his claims to the gratitude of his country, and the admiration of the world.

Hume's Character of Alfred.

"The merit of this prince, both in private and public life, may with advantage be set in opposition to that of any monarch or citizen which the annals of any age or any nation can present to us. He seems, indeed, to be the complete model of that perfect character, which under the denomination of a sage or wise man, the philosophers have been fond of delineating, rather as a fiction of their imagination, than in hopes of ever seeing it reduced to practice; so happily were all his virtues tempered together, so justly were they blended, and so powerfully did each prevent the other from exceeding its proper bounds. He knew how to conciliate the most enterprising spirit with the coolest moderation; the most obstinate perseverance with the easiest flexibility; the most severe justice with the greatest lenity; the greatest vigour in command with the greatest affability of deportment; the highest capacity and inclination for science, with

the most shining talents for action. His civil and his military virtues are almost equally the objects of our admiration, excepting only, that the former, being more rare among princes, as well as more useful, seem chiefly to challenge our applause. Nature also, as if desirous that so bright a production of her skill should be set in the fairest light, had bestowed on him all bodily accomplishments, vigour of limbs, dignity of shape and air, and a pleasant, engaging, and open countenance."

Smollett's Character of Alfred.

"Alfred, that he might be the better able to extend his charity and munificence, regulated his finances with the most perfect economy, and divided his revenues into a certain number of parts, which he appropriated to the different expenses of the state, and the exercise of his own private liberality and devotion; nor was he a less economist in the distribution of his time, which he divided into three equal portions, allotting one to sleep, meals, and exercise; and devoting the other two to writing, reading, business, and prayer. That this division might not be encroached upon inadvertently, he measured them by tapers of an equal size, which he kept continually burning before the shrines of relics. Alfred seemed to be a genius self-taught, which contrived and comprehended every thing that would contribute to the security of his kingdom. He was author of that inestimable privilege, peculiar to the subjects of this nation, which consists in their being tried by their peers; for he first instituted juries, or at least improved upon an old institution, by specifying the number and qualifications of jurymen, and extending their power to trials of property as well as criminal indictments: but no regulation redounded more to his honour and the advantage of his kingdom, than the measures he took to prevent rapine, murder, and other outrages, which had so long been committed with impunity. His attention stooped even to the meanest circumstance of his people's conveniency. He introduced the art of brick-making, and built his own houses of those materials; which being much more durable and secure from accidents than timber, his example was followed by his subjects in general. He was, doubtless, an object of most perfect esteem and admiration; for, exclusive of the qualities which distinguished him as a warrior and legislator, his personal character was amiable in every respect. Died 897, aged 52."

Carte's Character of Alfred.

"Alfred was a Prince of whom it is difficult to speak with justice; for his due eulogium must seem exaggerated, and the least detraction from it would be an injury to his character. There met in him all the qualities which contribute to form the great man; great talents, great application, great courage, and a great mind. Wherever we direct our attention, we find his conduct and institutions admirable, whilst his genius was so universal, that he excelled in every subject, science and business, to which he directed his attention. If we consider his conscientious discharge of all religious duties, we might suppose that he had never been out of a cloister: if his wars, that he had lived no where but in a camp: if his learning and writings, that he had passed his whole life at an university: if his regulations for the good of his people, and the security of his king-

dom, that he made the laws the study of his life, and that the arts of government were the only subjects of his reflection.

Surrounded, when he came to the throne, by shoals of Danes continually augmented by their piratical countrymen, and whose sole delights were war and plunder, he had perpetual opportunities for exercising his military skill and personal bravery. Mahabury says, that he entered into fifty-six principal battles with the Danes, either by sea or land, many of which, when on the point of being lost, he restored by his personal valour; and being never daunted with a foil, he was ready the next moment for a new action, or rather, more eager for it, though more circumspect.

When he had fortified his coasts and frontiers, and formed a regular militia, and no longer feared a foreign foe, he directed a large portion of his attention to the encouragement of learning, the love of which was his favourite passion. He habitually conversed with learned men, whom he kept about his court, and who were ever present at his meals and in hours of relaxation from business, and from which source he made large accessions to his knowledge. Alfred's contemporaries, as well as his writings, abundantly confirm the proficiency which he made in music, grammar, rhetoric, philosophy, geography, architecture, mathematics, history, and poetry. His fortitude and activity were extraordinary. He saw and examined into every thing himself: his care and diligence extended every where, and to all matters; and such was his prudence in resolving on measures, as well as his constancy and firmness in pursuing them, that he never failed of carrying any one point. Thus he made religion and learning flourish throughout his kingdom, elevating it by his own individual exertions, from a state of comparative barbarism. He also established such wise regulations for the administration of justice, and for securing the liberty of the subject, that he may fairly be regarded as the founder of that stupendous monument of human wisdom—the British Constitution.

Alfred also, in his private life, was the most valuable and amiable man in his country. He had a fine person, a calm but lively aspect, a graceful mien, and easy deportment; he was of an even and cheerful temper, agreeable in conversation, and affable to all; knowing well how to condescend, without sinking below his dignity, and to gain his subjects' affections, without lessening their respect. He was chaste, temperate in his diet, charitable and good to all the world; beneficent, generous, magnificent on every befitting occasion; and when to all these excellences it is added, that he possessed these without a single vice, he may be pronounced to be the most perfect of human characters, and justly to be entitled, by the concurrence of natives and foreigners, to the glorious appellation of "ALFRED THE GREAT."

THE END.

ERRATA.

Page xxiv.	Line 37,	For <i>Priests</i> , read <i>Craftsmen</i> .
„ xxvii.	„ 14,	For <i>To late too</i> , read <i>Too late to</i> .
„ xxvii.	„ 29,	Insert at the end, <i>are</i>
„ xxxviii.	„ 6,	For <i>founder</i> , read <i>re-founder</i> .
„ xl.	„ 7,	For <i>three</i> , read <i>few</i> .
„ xliii.	„ 10,	<i>Deli and</i>
„ lxxxi.	„ 18,	After <i>of</i> add <i>a</i> .
„ civ.	„ 12,	For <i>his</i> , read <i>their</i> .
„ 60.	„ 12	For <i>concious</i> , read <i>conscious</i> .
„ 62.	„ 23,	For <i>to</i> , read <i>a</i> .
„ Last	Line,	add ' <i>Err!</i> ' <i>Alfred</i> cried,
„ 241.	„ 3,	For <i>strange</i> , read <i>change</i> .
„ 296.	„ 90,	For <i>has</i> , read <i>had</i> .

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